CARNARVON GORGE • SAPPHIRE GEMFIELDS • BLACKDOWN TABLELAND • EMERALD

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND HIGHLANDS

EXPLORE MORE

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Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve

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CONNECT WITH US

Share your Central Queensland Highlands adventures with us **#explorecqh**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

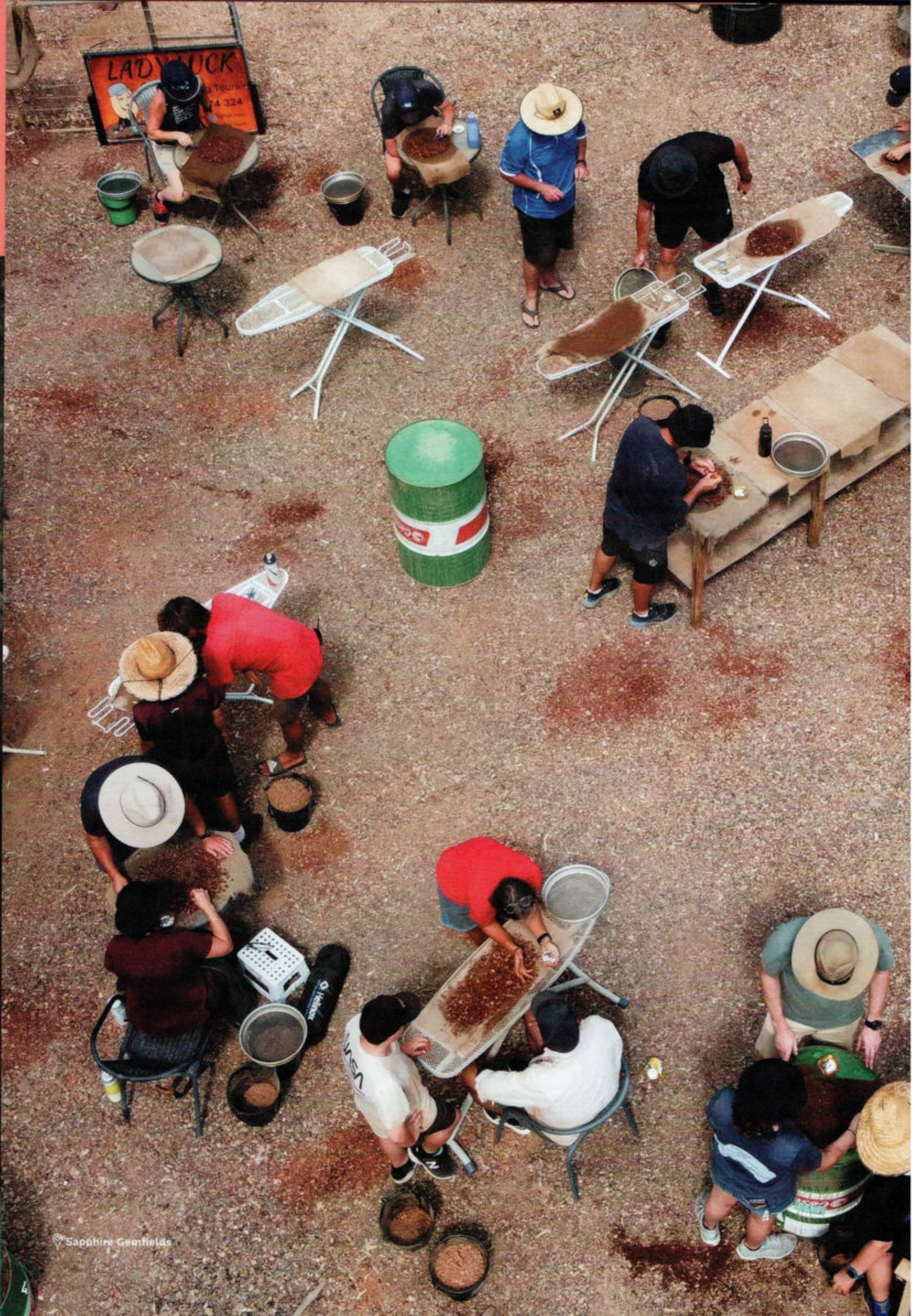
We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands across the Central Queensland Highlands, and we recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Colin McPherson, Moondagudda Country, rainbow serpent land, 2019
Moondagudda Country shows the Central Highlands local government area traversed by roads, dotted with towns, and enriched by mining and agricultural industries.

Moondagudda is the creator which shapes the landscape. Each serpent represents a river of the Fitzroy Basin, changing colour as they merge.

Sapphire Gemfields



Sapphire Gemfields

EXPLORE MORE

There are some destinations whose attractions all sit on the surface, are easy to see, predictable and overpopulated, and then there are others that sit more quietly, sparking your curiosity and nudging you quietly to explore more.

The Central Queensland Highlands is one of them, with its diverse landscape that encourages you to dig a little deeper with each and every kilometre you put on your odometer.

Located in Central Queensland at the crossroads of the Capricorn and Gregory highways, these two arterials connect travellers to 60,000km² of the equally arid and verdant Central Queensland Highlands.

While it might be diverse in landscape, the region is starkly similar in its shared values; it's grounded, honest and authentic.

The true value of the destination can be found all over the terra firma – whether you're interested in geological creations, cascading cliffs, Indigenous history, or the agricultural industry.

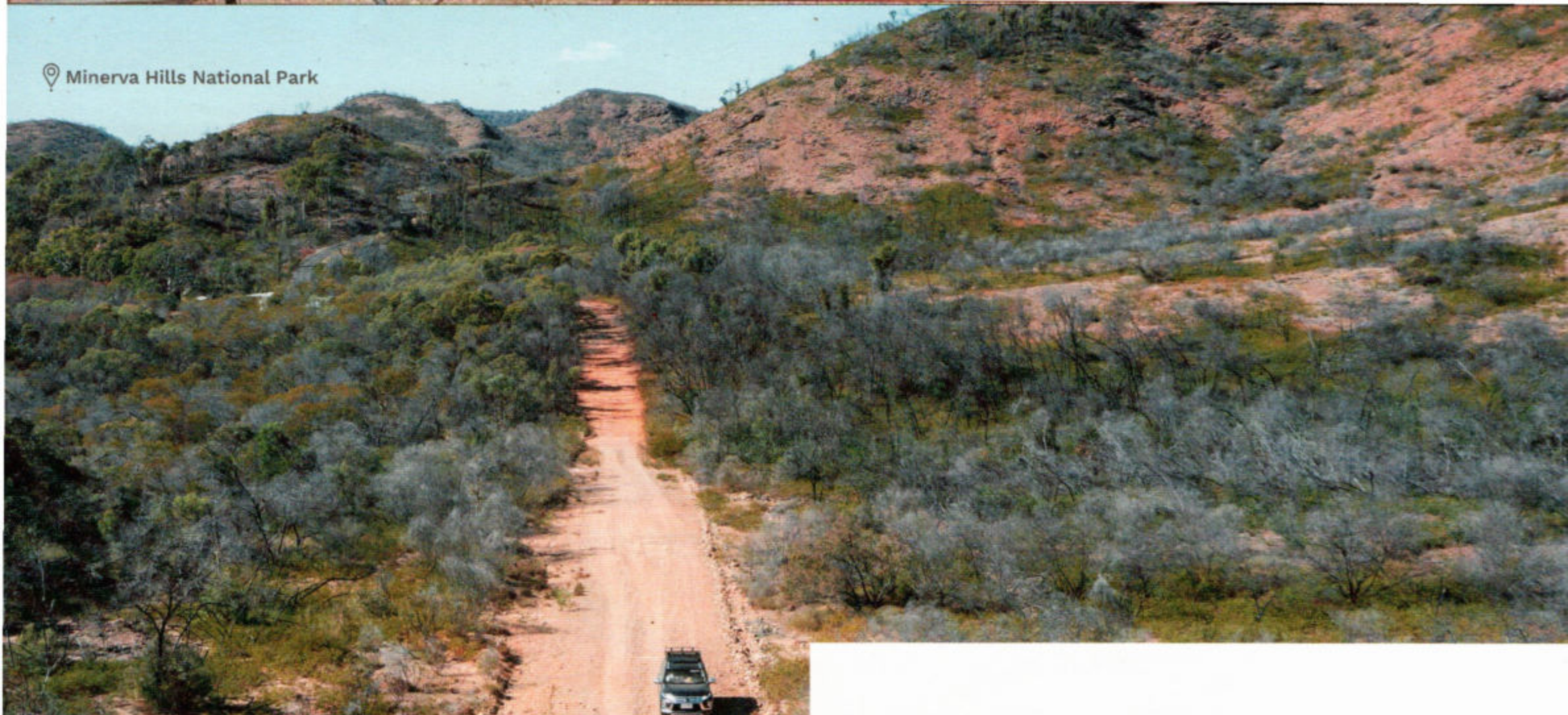
While most choose to define their adventure by the trifecta of natural attractions – Carnarvon Gorge, Blackdown Tableland National Park, and the Sapphire Gemfields – to stay only on these beaten paths means you miss what more there is to explore.

In between, small country towns define the visitor experience, with friendly locals who reflect what Outback hospitality is all about. Quaint communities, historical museums and railway stations are only a marked signpost away.

No matter when you visit, every day is a new discovery, whether it's a new Indigenous rock art site, a precious sapphire stone or historical landmark.

There's always something to discover. There's always something to uncover.

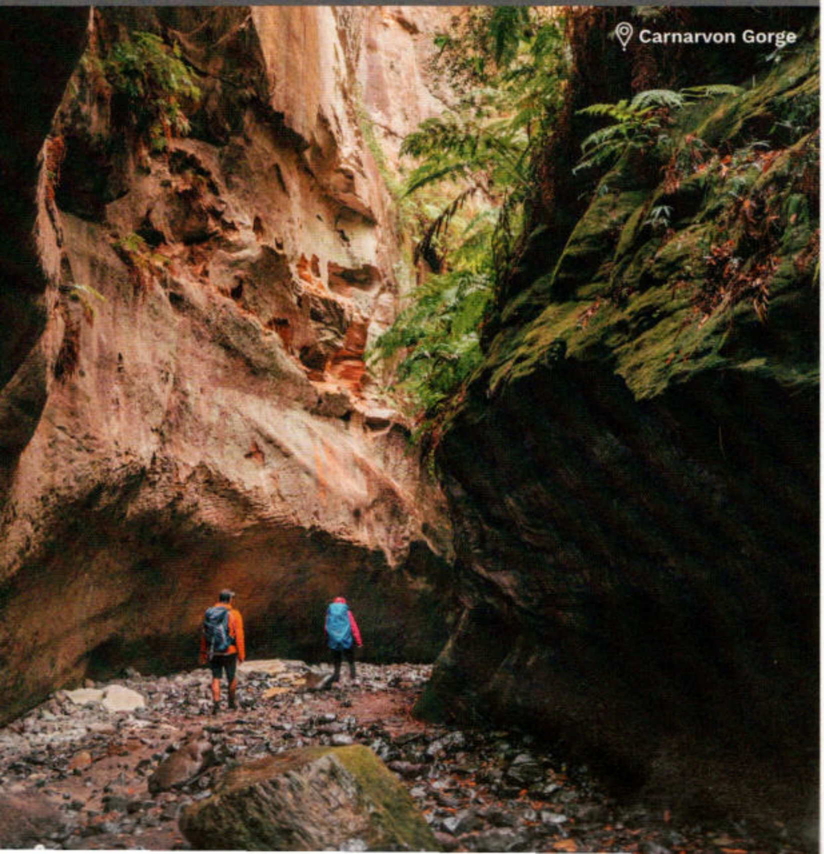
And just when you think that's everything there is to see and do in the Central Queensland Highlands, you'll find there's more to explore.



Minerva Hills National Park

SELF-DRIVE ITINERARIES

Leave the city in the rear-view mirror and take to the open roads of the Central Queensland Highlands on a self-drive adventure. Our affordability means you can spend more time with us than you might on the coast and our temperate climate encourages you to stay and play a little while. When there's more to explore, you're in the driving seat to a new adventure.



Carnarvon Gorge

ITINERARY 1

EXPLORE ICONIC NATIONAL PARKS

Day One: Nuga Nuga National Park

Travelling north from Injune, stop for morning tea at the scenic Lonesome Lookout, Expedition National Park (55km). Continue to Nuga Nuga National Park (75km), allowing plenty of time to set yourself up for a remote bush camping experience. Spend the rest of the day enjoying the tranquillity of Lake Nuga Nuga by canoe or walking around the shoreline. Note: unsealed road.

Day Two: Carnarvon Gorge

Drive an hour and a half (125km) to reach the Carnarvon Gorge section of Carnarvon National Park. After a picnic lunch in the visitor area, follow the walking trail to Boolimba Bluff for spectacular views of the distant ranges. On return, take a refreshing swim in the nearby rock pool.

Day Three: Carnarvon Gorge

Rise with the birds and take an early morning walk along the Nature Trail. See if you can spot platypus swimming in Carnarvon Creek. Book a full day walking tour and let an expert guide you to iconic attractions and exclusive untracked spots. You can also join a night safari to search for the gorge's nocturnal beasties.

Day Four: Minerva Hills National Park

Two hours north is Minerva Hills National Park (185km). Stop at Fred's Gorge to enjoy a picnic with views. After lunch, explore the walking tracks and lookouts which survey surrounding farming country, Virgin Rock and Springsure. Note: high clearance vehicles only.

Day Five: Blackdown Tableland National Park

Travel two and a half hours (215km) to Blackdown Tableland National Park. Stop at Yaddamen Dhina Lookout for sweeping views of the bordering ranges. Brave the 240-stair descent deep into Gudda Gumoo Gorge before cooling off in the spring-fed rock pool below.

Explore More

Visit the Salvator Rosa and Ka Ka Mundi sections of Carnarvon National Park.

ITINERARY 2

GET DOWN TO EARTH

Day One: Anakie and Sapphire

Start your morning at the Anakie Crossroads with a locally roasted coffee served beneath the towering Sapphire Reflections artwork. Continue into the Anakie Railway Station and seek out the 140-year-old bottle tree, engraved with the initials of the soldiers who were on their way to war.

Spend the afternoon in nearby Sapphire searching for gems at a fossicking park, before taking a walk with the wallabies at the Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve.

Day Two: Sapphire and Rubyvale

Now you have the fossicking basics down pat, take it a step further and spend the morning on a tag along tour out in the 'fields. Afterwards, reward your hard work with an icy-cold schooner of Fossicker's Ale at the Rubyvale pub.

Leave enough time in the day to take an underground mine tour, venturing 16 metres beneath the surface to see how pioneer miners extracted sapphires.

Day Three: Rubyvale

No matter your budget, it's free to spend the morning admiring the beautiful jewellery in local gem shops and galleries. Stop for coffee and treat yourself with a slice of authentic Austrian strudel*.

Take a drive around the mining claims and see some of the unusual short-term dwellings. Be sure to stop at Policeman's Knob to spot rock wallabies and watch the sun set.

Day Four: Willows Gemfields

You're ready to step out on your own! Hire the equipment, buy a licence, and spend the day fossicking at Willows Gemfields.

Explore More

Four-wheel-driving and dirt biking are a great way to explore the Sapphire Gemfields. The area has an abundant network of dirt roads and tracks to discover.

Underground Mine Tour, Rubyvale

Capella Pioneer Village

ITINERARY 3

UNCOVER HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Day One: Rolleston and Springsure

Take the morning to explore Rolleston by foot, admiring the historic buildings that line the main street on the self-guided Rolleston Heritage Walk. Finish your tour at Beazley Park and enjoy a hot coffee from the Rolleston Coffee Cart*.

Continue to Springsure (70km) and visit the Federation Woolshed*, a treasure-trove of historical photos and memorabilia. Ask about access to Yumba Burin (Keeping Place) to learn more about the region's Indigenous history.

Day Two: Emerald

On your way to Emerald (70km), take a detour to Lake Maraboon. Not only has the dam enabled the development of the region's mining and agricultural industries, but it is also a great place to fish, boat, and picnic.

See Emerald's history laid out as colourful mosaics on the Centenary of Federation Pathway, then tour some of the town's original buildings at the Pioneer Cottage Complex*. While in town, snap a picture of the 1900s National Trust-listed railway station.

Day Three: Capella

Spend the day at Capella (55km), starting at the Pioneer Village*, which houses items from the region's agricultural, pastoral, and mining past. Wander along the main street to see the historic bakehouse oven and Australian Light Horse monument.

Day Four: Blackwater and Duaringa

Head east to Blackwater (130km) and learn about the history of coal mining at the Blackwater International Coal Centre. The nearby Lions Park has one of the largest displays of flags in the world.

Finish your journey in Duaringa (85km), exploring the historical buildings and sites that shaped the town's history on the Duaringa Historical Trail.

Explore More

Get to know the colourful characters and stories of Comet's past on the Comet Tales and Walking Trails tour, followed by a tipple at the historic 120-year-old pub.

**Open Easter to October*

Divide Fossicking Land

SAPPHIRE GEMFIELDS

It might seem the name gives away everything the Sapphire Gemfields has to offer but dig a little deeper and you'll discover there's more to explore of this unique corner of the Central Queensland Highlands.

Taking in the townships of Rubyvale, Sapphire, Anakie and Willows Gemfields, the Sapphire Gemfields are a 45-minute drive west of Emerald and the largest sapphire-bearing area in the southern hemisphere.

MUST EXPLORE

Underground Mine Tour

Explore the network of winding tunnels hidden 16 metres beneath the surface on an underground mine tour. Tours take visitors through a formerly working sapphire mine, providing insight into the conditions endured by pioneer miners.

Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve

Escape to the sanctuary of the Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve and walk or cycle along the 3.6-kilometre flat, gravel tracks. Arrive in the early morning or just before dusk and you may have kangaroos or wallaroos as company. The wetland also teems with birdlife, which can be observed from the camouflaged hide.

Sapphire Gemfields Interpretive Trail

Go on a historic journey, stopping at interpretive panels and place markers, to learn about the characters, capers and boom or bust nature of the local gem industry.

The trail begins at Sapphire Reflections, a 12-metre-high art piece, adorned with sparkling glass panels, located at the Anakie Crossroads.

Pick up a guide from the Central Queensland Highlands Visitor Information Centre or download at **centralqueenslandhighlands.com.au.**

Policeman's Knob

Timing is everything when you visit Policeman's Knob, the oldest known volcanic basalt plug on Earth. Climb to the top of the rocky terrain at sundown to encounter rock wallabies out for dinner, then take in the incredible sunset.

If you're wondering how the plug earned its name, the clue lies in the 360-degree view. It's said that policemen used to rely on the clear vantage point to spot criminals.

Note: high clearance vehicles only.

WHERE TO FIND SAPPHIRES

Designated Fossicking Areas

There's a thrill in searching for a sapphire which has been waiting under the surface for millions of years for a visitor just like you to find. Begin your search at one of the designated fossicking areas and lands. You'll need a fossicking licence, hand tools and a hefty dose of grit and determination. Be warned! Many find the activity addictive which turns into a lifelong hobby.

Tag Along Fossicking Tours

If it's your first time fossicking, join a tag along tour to get you up to speed. Learn to dig, sieve, wash and inspect your diggings under the guidance of an experienced miner. All equipment and expert tuition are supplied, and you get to keep everything you find.

Fossicking Parks

With the digging work already done, fossicking parks allow you to simply purchase a bag of wash and start searching straight away. Friendly staff are on hand to provide advice and guidance on how to sieve and sort your sapphires.

Specking

If there has been a downpour of rain, it is time to go specking. Specking is the art of intently scanning the ground to spot sapphires on the surface and is not limited to the fossicking areas and lands. Try specking along dry creek beds or bush tracks.

Gem Shops and Galleries

For guaranteed success, there's no better place to find a locally mined and cut sapphire or quality sapphire jewellery than the local gem shops and galleries. Gem cutters are available to facet your very own find and jewellers will set them into a piece of jewellery that could become a treasured family heirloom.

Scan to purchase your fossicking licence or camping permit online. Alternatively, call MyMines (07) 3199 8133.

Sapphire Reflections

Policeman's Knob

EXPLORE MORE

Miners Common

Be ready to share the road with cattle, horses and camels when driving around Sapphire and Rubyvale. The Miners Common, the last of its kind in Australia, allows for unique rules and regulations including the right to graze livestock.

Four-Wheel Driving

Four-wheel drive or ride your trail bike on the network of dirt roads that crisscross the area. Spend a day exploring the Tomahawk Creek fossicking area with its 2,500 hectares of bush tracks.

Camping

There's nothing like spending the night under a star-filled sky. Camping is allowed in designated fossicking areas and permits can be purchased online.

Geo-Caching

Go on a modern-day treasure hunt, using GPS to find 'gems' hidden across the Sapphire Gemfields.

Wildlife

The bush surrounds of the Sapphire Gemfields make it a wildlife oasis. Spot brolgas dancing at the wetlands, kangaroos grazing by the road and camels roaming the Miners Common.

Bush Architecture

Take a drive to see the unusual dwellings of the Sapphire Gemfields. Permanent buildings are not permitted on mining claims, causing residents to come up with creative short-term alternatives. Like the pioneers before them, many residents use unique and recycled materials such as billy boulders, bush timber, corrugated iron and even glass bottles.

Local Characters

Friendly locals, affectionately called Gemmies, are happy to chat and share fossicking tips and historical tales. Many of the residents were once tourists who came to visit and never left.

MINERS HERITAGE

Miners Heritage Guided Tour (Min. 2 people)

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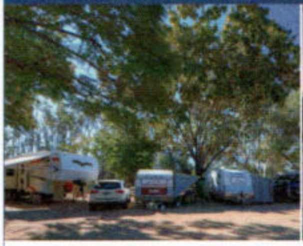
RUBYVALE CARAVAN PARK



Located in the centre of Rubyvale across from the pub, our shady caravan sites and affordable cabins make the perfect base for your Gemfields adventure.

- Flat, easy-accessible and powered sites
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take a peek at our place on Youtube!

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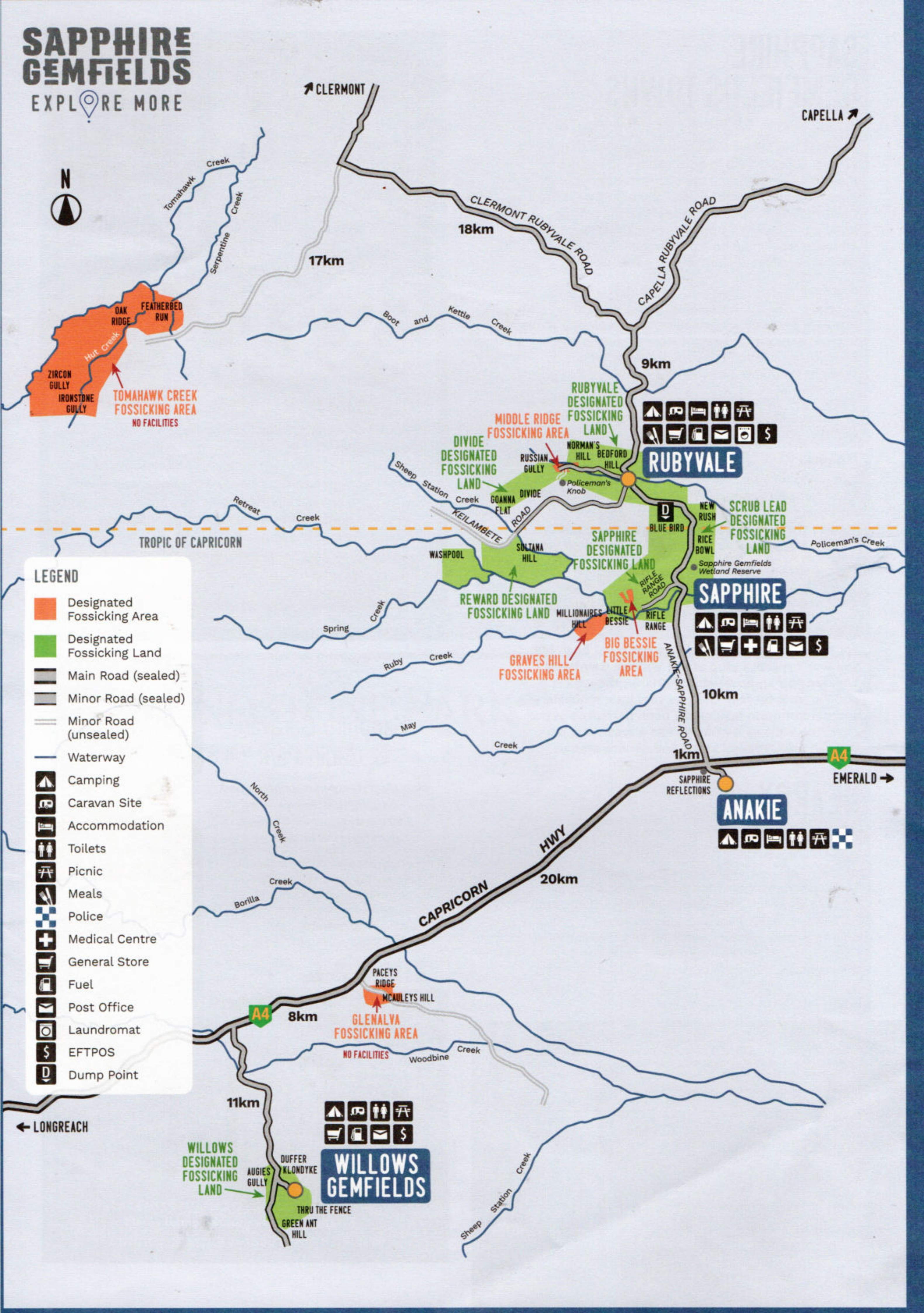

SAPPHIRE GEMFIELDS
EXPLORE MORE
N
CLERMONT
CAPELLA
CLERMONT RUBYVALE ROAD
CAPELLA RUBYVALE ROAD
18km
17km
9km
10km
1km
20km
8km
11km
Tomahawk Creek
Serpentine Creek
Boot and Kettle Creek
OAK RIDGE
FEATHERBED RUN
Hut Creek
ZIRCON GULLY
IRONSTONE GULLY
TOMAHAWK CREEK FOSSICKING AREA
NO FACILITIES
RUBYVALE DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
MIDDLE RIDGE FOSSICKING AREA
DIVIDE DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
NORMAN'S HILL
BEDFORD HILL
RUSSIAN GULLY
Policeman's Knob
RUBYVALE
GOANNA FLAT
DIVIDE
Sheep Station Creek
KEILAMBETE ROAD
Retreat Creek
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
BLUE BIRD
NEW RUSH
SCRUB LEAD DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
RICE BOWL
Policeman's Creek
Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve
SAPPHIRE DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
WASHPOOL
SOLTANA HILL
RIFLE RANGE ROAD
SAPPHIRE
REWARD DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
MILLIONAIRES HILL
LITTLE BESSIE
RIFLE RANGE
Spring Creek
GRAVES HILL FOSSICKING AREA
BIG BESSIE FOSSICKING AREA
Ruby Creek
ANAKIE-SAPPHIRE ROAD
May Creek
A4
EMERALD
SAPPHIRE REFLECTIONS
ANAKIE
North Creek
CAPRICORN HWY
Borilla Creek
PACEYS RIDGE
MCAULEYS HILL
GLENALVA FOSSICKING AREA
NO FACILITIES
Woodbine Creek
LONGREACH
WILLOWS DESIGNATED FOSSICKING LAND
DUFFER
KLONDYKE
AUGIES GULLY
WILLOWS GEMFIELDS
THRU THE FENCE
GREEN ANT HILL
Sheep Station Creek
LEGEND
Designated Fossicking Area
Designated Fossicking Land
Main Road (sealed)
Minor Road (sealed)
Minor Road (unsealed)
Waterway
Camping
Caravan Site
Accommodation
Toilets
Picnic
Meals
Police
Medical Centre
General Store
Fuel
Post Office
Laundromat
EFTPOS
Dump Point

SAPPHIRE GEMFIELDS TOWNS

Anakie

Discover the oldest town on the Sapphire Gemfields, Anakie, which is rich in both history and gems. History buffs will enjoy the quaint railway station built in 1884 as part of the rail push into western Queensland. Be sure to look behind the station for the 140-year-old bottle tree, engraved with the initials of soldiers who were on their way to war. Anakie has a cabin and caravan park.

Sapphire

Sapphire lives up to its name, with a host of sapphire gem cutters, jewellers and fossicking parks located here. Other 'gems' include the RSL, thrift shop, cafés, general store, service station and a range of accommodation providers.

If you love a photo opportunity, then the Big Ring, Big Spanner, and Big Pick, Shovel and Sieve can all be found in and around Sapphire.

Rubyvale

Rubyvale has a lot to offer travellers, from attractions including gem cutters, jewellers, fossicking parks and mine tours, to traveller conveniences including a pub, cafés, general store, service station and accommodation providers.

For something a little wacky, visit the nearby Thong Tree (feel free to add your own broken plugger) or get a photo of the Tellembuggerem road sign.

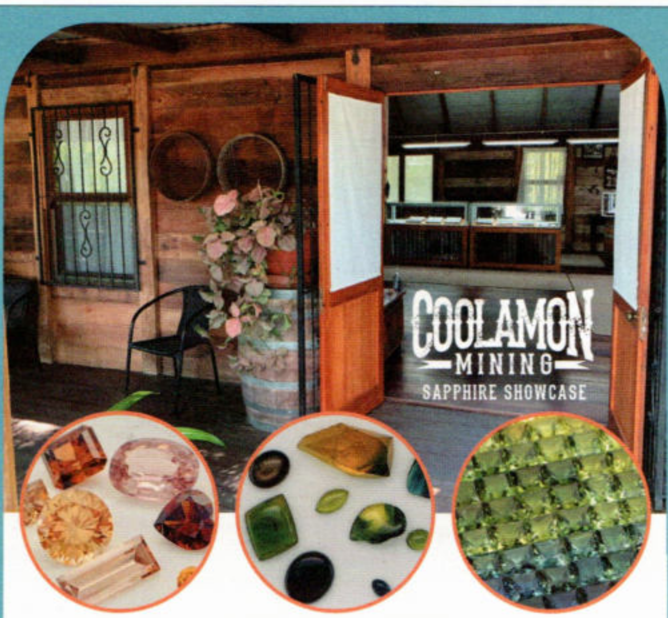
Willows Gemfields

For those looking to experience the quiet bush life, you won't regret a stop at the Willows Gemfields. Located half an hour west of Anakie, the area is a popular spot for fossicking as very little machinery and no corporate mining has been permitted in the past. The Willows Gemfields has a fossicking park, caravan park, general store, and service station.

NEARBY

Bogantungan

On 26 February 1960, Bogantungan became the site of one of Queensland's worst train disasters. The Midlander passenger train was passing over the flooded Medway Creek when the bridge collapsed. Sadly, four passengers and three crew were killed, and 43 people were injured. Call into the historical railway station to see interpretive panels and memorabilia about the crash.



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Gudda Gumoo

BLACKDOWN TABLELAND

Mother Nature has proven again that she's the best landscape gardener. Rising abruptly above the surrounding plains, Blackdown Tableland National Park boasts a cool oasis of deep gorges, spectacular lookouts, scenic waterfalls, and unusual plants.

TOP 3 MOST INSTAGRAMMABLE TRACKS

1 **Gudda Gumoo Gorge** *4km return, 2hr*
Brave the 240-step descent into the gorge and cool off in the spring-fed rock pool below. Get a photo of the aptly named Rainbow Falls which, in the right light, reflects a shimmering rainbow.

2 **Yaddamen Dhina** *200m return, 5min*
For that 'edge of the world' feeling, call into the Yaddamen Dhina lookout, which offers stunning views of the distant ranges and plains 500 metres below.

3 **Mook Mook** *2.4km return, 50min*
Best at sunrise, capture the morning sun reflecting on sandstone cliffs from Mook Mook lookout.

Rainbow Falls

EXPLORE MORE

Rock Art
Blackdown Tableland is the traditional home of the Ghungalu people. Rock faces display their artwork, providing a vivid reminder of the strong cultural connection.

Four-wheel-driving
Travel the Loop Road (20km), past magnificent sandstone outcrops, alive with basket ferns and king orchids, then stop at Mitha Boongulla lookout for views of the surrounding plains.

Wildlife
The best way to see Blackdown's birdlife is to wake with them at Munall camping area. By day, look carefully on sandstone ledges for basking skinks, geckos and goannas. By night, take a torch-lit stroll to glimpse gliders, owls and insectivorous bats taking to the air.

ESSENTIALS

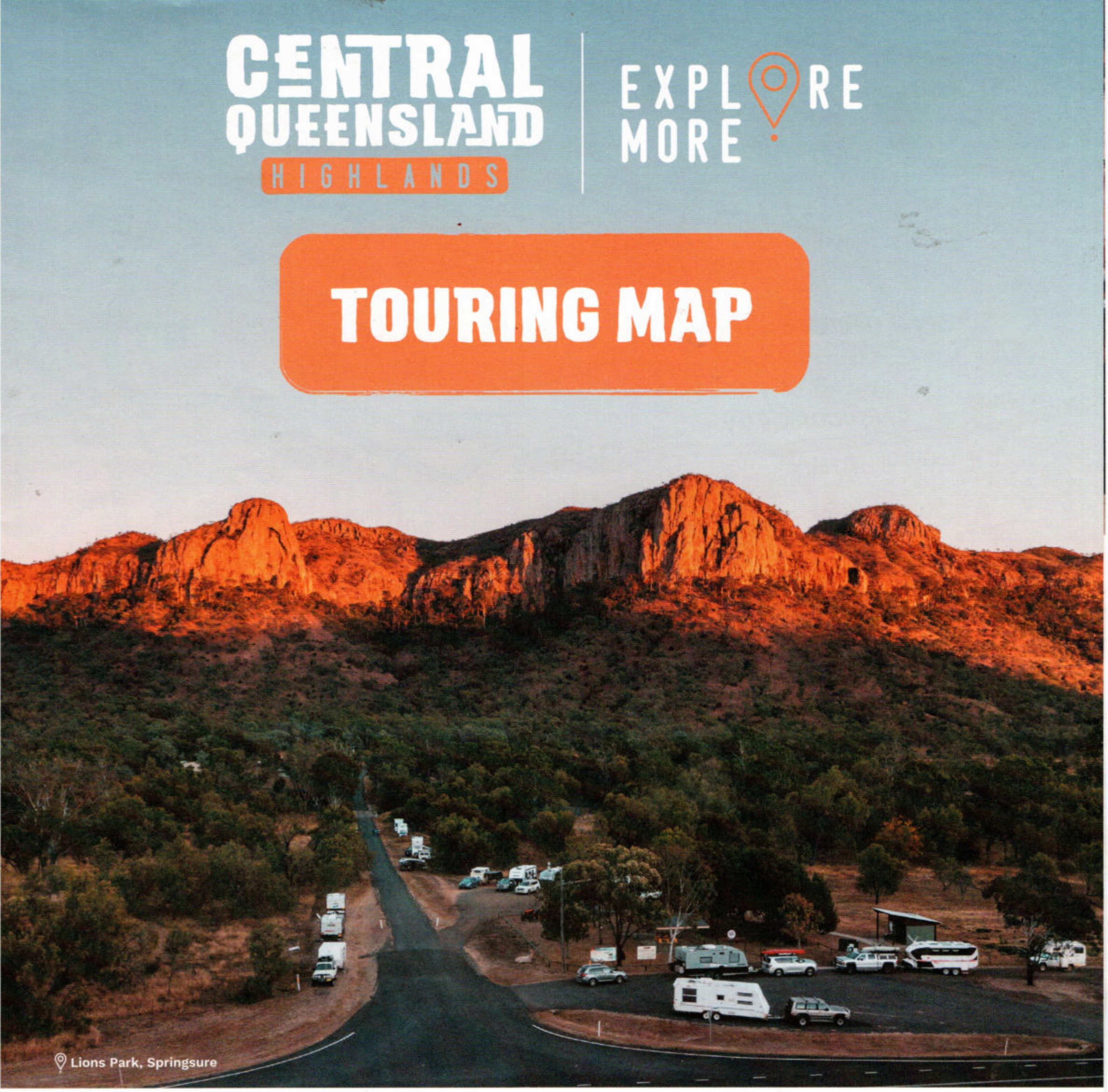
Picnic Areas
Picnic tables, gas barbecues and toilets are provided for day visitors at Yaddamen Dhina Lookout.

Access
Blackdown Tableland National Park is located between Dingo and Bluff. The six-kilometre sealed road up the tableland is steep and winding, and unsuitable for motorhomes or towing heavy trailers and caravans. Within the park, the road is mostly unsealed. Gudda Gumoo Gorge carpark is 15 kilometres from Yaddamen Dhina lookout.

Accommodation
Relax in Munall camping area's cool and quiet bush surrounds. Book your camp site in advance online with Queensland National Parks or in person at the CQH Visitor Information Centre. Caravan and motel accommodation is available nearby in Dingo (35km), Bluff (40km), Blackwater (60km), and Duaringa (70km).

CENTRAL QUEENSLAND HIGHLANDS | EXPLORE MORE

TOURING MAP



Lions Park, Springsure

GETTING HERE

Road

A classic road trip is one of the best ways to experience the wide-open spaces of the Central Queensland Highlands. Navigating is easy with two major highways running east-west (Capricorn Highway) and north-east (Gregory Highway).

An electric vehicle fast charging station is available in Dingo, with additional stations expected to open in 2023/24.

Air

Short on time? Emerald is only a one-and-a-half-hour flight from Brisbane. QantasLink and Virgin Australia offer daily services from Brisbane.

Car

Once you arrive, there are hire cars ready to begin your self-drive experience. Major car hire companies operate from Emerald Airport. Booking ahead is recommended.

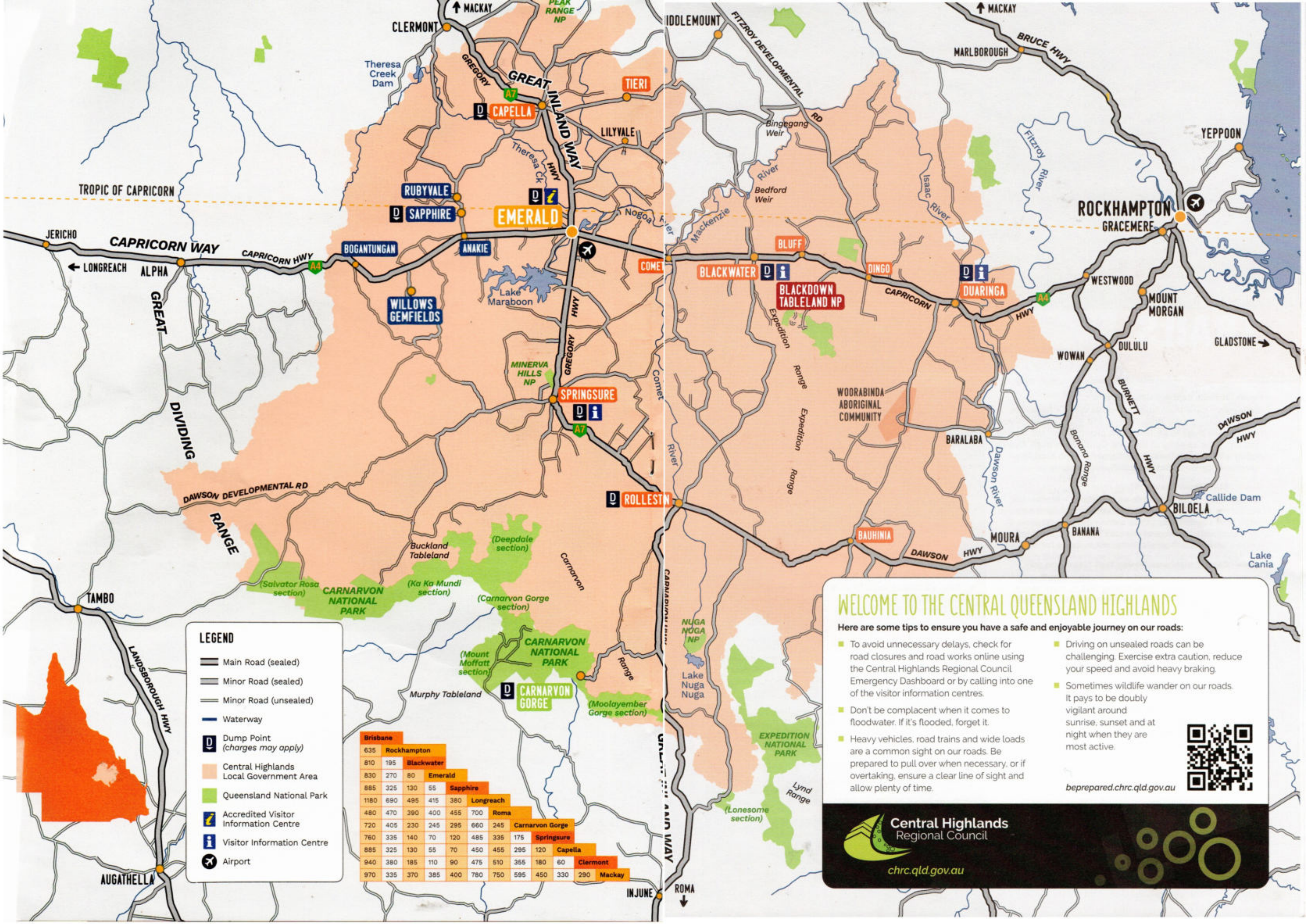
A taxi service is available in Emerald tand Blackwater.

Rail and Coach

Alternatively, sit back and watch the scenery go by on a rail or coach service.

The Spirit of the Outback operates twice-weekly rail services along the coast from Brisbane to Rockhampton, and then west through Blackwater and Emerald to its final destination of Longreach.

Daily coach services are available from Rockhampton with Greyhound Australia, and Mackay with Mackay Transit Coaches.



WELCOME TO THE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND HIGHLANDS

Here are some tips to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable journey on our roads:

- To avoid unnecessary delays, check for road closures and road works online using the Central Highlands Regional Council Emergency Dashboard or by calling into one of the visitor information centres.
- Don't be complacent when it comes to floodwater. If it's flooded, forget it.
- Heavy vehicles, road trains and wide loads are a common sight on our roads. Be prepared to pull over when necessary, or if overtaking, ensure a clear line of sight and allow plenty of time.
- Driving on unsealed roads can be challenging. Exercise extra caution, reduce your speed and avoid heavy braking.
- Sometimes wildlife wander on our roads. It pays to be doubly vigilant around sunrise, sunset and at night when they are most active.

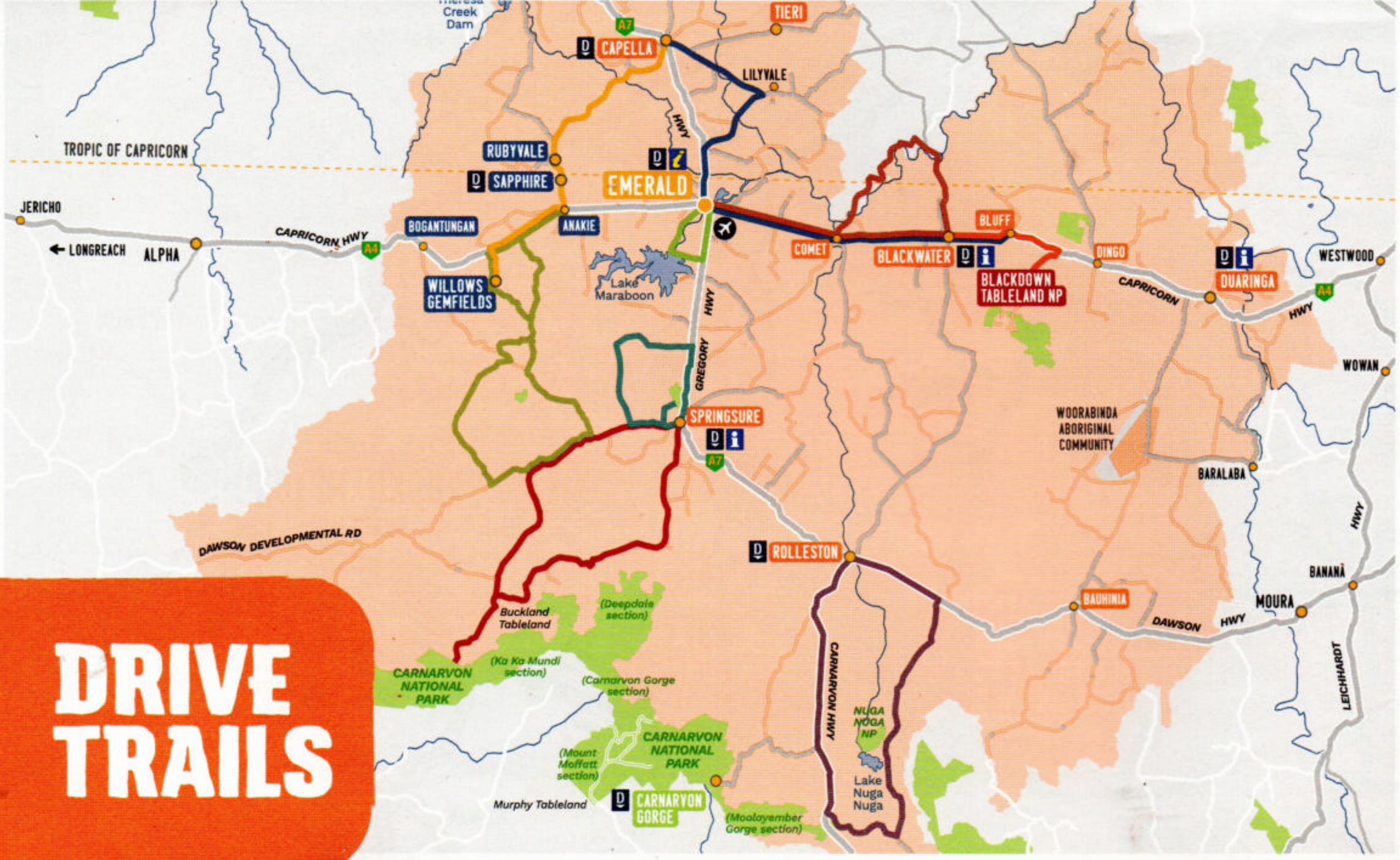
beprepared.chrc.qld.gov.au

Central Highlands Regional Council

chrc.qld.gov.au

Brisbane												
635	**Rockhampton**											
810	195	**Blackwater**										
830	270	80	**Emerald**									
885	325	130	55	**Sapphire**								
1180	690	495	415	380	**Longreach**							
480	470	390	400	455	700	**Roma**						
720	405	230	245	295	660	245	**Carnarvon Gorge**					
760	335	140	70	120	485	335	175	**Springsure**				
885	325	130	55	70	450	455	295	120	**Capella**			
940	380	185	110	90	475	510	355	180	60	**Clermont**		
970	335	370	385	400	780	750	595	450	330	290	**Mackay**	

DRIVE TRAILS



Arcadia Explorer *245km return*

Rolleston – Lake Nuga Nuga – Arcadia Valley - Rolleston

Enjoy a relaxing drive through farm and grazing land on your way to Lake Nuga Nuga. Stop for a picnic, watch the birdlife, and enjoy the serenity of the lake. Continue through Arcadia Valley with scenic views of the Carnarvon and Expedition Ranges. Note: unsealed roads. Dry weather only.

Blackdown Beauty *155km return*

Blackwater – Bluff – Blackdown Tableland – Blackwater

Follow the winding ascent to Blackdown Tableland National Park, with scenic views of the surrounding countryside. Go for a bushwalk to discover the park's heritage, tumbling creeks, and unusual plants. Note: not suitable for caravans.

Central Highlands Mining Trail *175km one way*

Capella – Lilyvale – Emerald – Blackwater - Bluff

Follow the Central Highlands Mining Trail to learn about the history, processes, and characters of the local coal mining industry.

Maraboon H20 *50km return*

Emerald – Lake Maraboon - Emerald

The trail takes you through the Emerald irrigation area. Journey over the 820-metre-long Fairbairn Dam wall to Lake Maraboon. Enjoy stunning views of the lake, spillway, and surrounding area from the lookout.

Minerva Discovery Loop *95km return*

Springsure – Minerva Hills - Springsure

Take in the natural beauty and panoramic views of Minerva Hills National Park. Call into the Wills Memorial site before continuing back to Springsure past the old Minerva coal mine. Note: high clearance vehicle recommended. Dry weather only.

Pioneers Pathway *115km one way*

Capella – Rubyvale – Sapphire – Anakie - Willows

Dip into the region's history, starting at the Capella Pioneer Village. Continue to the Sapphire Gemfields to explore its array of gem shops, galleries, and jewellers. Follow the Sapphire Gemfields Treasure Trail to learn about the characters, capers, and history of the fields.

ALL-WHEEL DRIVE

Unhook the van and get off the beaten track on these local backroads. For detailed instructions call into a local visitor information centre. Note: 4WD is recommended.

Willows Way *300km*

This route takes travellers through sapphire fossicking areas, along the top of the Nogoa River, and over a sandstone escarpment with scenic vistas of the surrounding countryside.

Ka Ka Mundi adventure *250km*

Explore the back of Springsure before venturing into the Ka Ka Mundi section of Carnarvon National Park.

Bedford Backwaters *200km*

Riley's Crossing Road follows the Mackenzie River, with opportunities to stop for a fish or picnic, before coming into Bedford Weir from the north.

FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE

Explore the challenging terrain and unexpected beauty of our national parks through the network of designated four-wheel drive tracks. *Note: 4WD only. Some roads may be impassable when wet.*

Blackdown Tableland National Park *20km*

Four-wheel drive past amazing sandstone outcrops alive with basket ferns and king orchids. Stop at Mitha Boongulla for panoramic views of the surrounding plains.

Salvator Rosa, Carnarvon National Park *20km*

Follow the rough track to the park's most outstanding features, including flowing springs and towering sandstone formations.

Mount Moffatt, Carnarvon National Park *300km*

Four-wheel drive past The Chimneys, Lots Wife, Marlong Arch and other towering rock formations, or head up through the Mahogany Forest to the head of Carnarvon Creek.

CBD Artwork

EMERALD

Serving as the hub to all the attraction spokes of the Central Queensland Highlands is Emerald.

With towns named Rubyvale and Sapphire, you wouldn't be the first to think precious stones are what gave this central business district its moniker, but it was the green fields after heavy rain that earnt its title.

Pioneer Cottage Complex

MUST EXPLORE

CQH Visitor Information Centre

Start your tour of the Central Queensland Highlands at the visitor information centre. The building is an attraction itself due to its straw bale construction. The walls are made from 300 bales of barley straw covered in earthen render.

Be warned - a rather fierce looking, three-metre long, bearded dragon will greet you at the centre. The giant lizard sculpture, dubbed Emerald Dragon, was made by a local artist using scrap metal.

Van Gogh Sunflower Painting

If your road trip involves ticking off Queensland's 'Big Things', get the camera ready for one of the world's largest reproductions of a Vincent van Gogh Sunflowers painting. The superstructure is 25 metres high with 13.6 tonnes of steel involved in its construction.

Centenary of Federation Mosaic Pathway

Turn back the clock and journey through Emerald's colourful history along the Centenary of Federation Mosaic Pathway. The footpath features intricately tiled designs that trace the region's history, from the beginning of time to visions of the future. Pick up an interpretive brochure from the visitor information centre.

Pioneer Cottage Complex

Emerald's history is on display at the Pioneer Cottage Complex. Explore the town's lead-lined lockup (1910), St Marks Presbyterian Church (1884), and communications museum, each filled with historical artefacts and memorabilia. Check opening times from Easter to October.

Emerald Botanic Gardens

Bring your picnic blanket and escape to the tranquil haven of the Emerald Botanic Gardens, located on the banks of the Nogoa River. The gardens extend over 42 hectares, with six kilometres of walking and biking tracks, leading to picnic areas, playgrounds, mazes, sculptures, and specialised plant communities. Dogs on leash are welcome.

EXPLORE MORE

Emerald Railway Station

Built in 1900, the National Trust-listed railway station, with its wrought iron lacework and pillared portico, provides visitors with great photo opportunities.

CBD Artworks

Take a short stroll along Egerton Street to view the town's magnificent public art. For the stories behind the artwork, pick up a brochure from the visitor information centre.

Emerald Art Gallery

Be inspired by the exciting and diverse calendar of exhibitions on display at the Emerald Art Gallery, showcasing local, state, and national artists. The gallery is located at the Central Highlands Regional Council office and is open during business hours.

Nature Trails

Whether you're looking to walk, jog or cycle, connect with nature on these bushland tracks.

- **Rifle Range Reserve**
  A network of five tracks, ranging in distances, wind through 80 hectares of native bushland. Entry points are on Rifle Range Road and Mayfair Drive.
- **Nogoa River Nature Trail**
  Explore more of the Nogoa River on the seven-kilometre trail. The southern section starts at the John Gay Bridge and leads to the Selma Weir.

  The northern section hugs the banks of the Nogoa River to the Town Weir, also known as Bottom Weir. The trail can be accessed from the Campbell Street and River Road intersection.

Fishing

Wet your line at the Town Weir, which offers easy-access, tree-lined banks and fishing rewards in the way of Saratoga, Yellow Belly and Barramundi.

Emerald Railway Station

RETAIL THERAPY

If you're looking to purchase a unique gift, stock up on supplies or need running repairs, Emerald has you covered. Get your retail therapy in the local boutiques and national chain stores located across three shopping centres and the central business district. Emerald also has a wide range of services, including medical, banking, and automotive, to meet your needs. Call into the CQH Visitor Information Centre for souvenirs and local handicrafts.

LOCAL TASTES

There's no better place than the Central Queensland Highlands - one of Australia's leading beef producers - to enjoy a succulent steak. However, if a sizzling steak doesn't tempt you there are plenty of other options at local restaurants.

Cafés leave you spoilt for choice, offering freshly roasted coffee, gourmet burgers, home baked favourites, and healthy options.

If it's a beer you're after, with four pubs and two sporting clubs in Emerald, there is always somewhere to grab a relaxed counter meal after a day exploring.

WELLNESS

Pack your yoga mat and add a little bit of me-time to your travel plans. Emerald offers a range of yoga, pilates, tai chi and meditation classes. Book in for a massage, reiki or bowen therapy, or be pampered at one of the beauty therapists.

If your version of wellness is hitting the gym, Emerald has five, boasting a range of equipment and classes. The Botanic Gardens are the perfect spot for cycling or walking and play host to the weekly parkrun. Other facilities include an Olympic-size swimming pool, squash and tennis courts, and golf course.

FAIRBAIRN BAKERY

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41-43 Hospital Rd Emerald Q 4720 **P** 07 4982 1485
8 Railway St Blackwater Q 4717 **P** 07 4986 1014
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Healthy Body, Mind & Soul

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Outback Exploratorium

There is something to excite everyone at Outback Exploratorium's Discovery Space with various hands-on activities and creative spaces specifically designed for 3-15 year olds. OXp hosts Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) community events, school excursions, private parties and holiday programs for all ages. Our gift shop stocks a range of STEAM based gifts and locally made products.

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FAMILY FUN IDEAS

There's no shortage of things to keep kids entertained in the Central Queensland Highlands. Base yourself in Emerald and work through these tried and tested, kid-friendly activities on your next family getaway. How many can you tick off the list?

Sapphire Hunting
Children will enjoy the thrill of searching for gems at one of the **Sapphire Gemfields** fossicking parks. Follow it up with an underground mine tour or go for a rock hopping adventure up Policeman's Knob.

Wilderness Wanderlust
Take the family to nearby **Blackdown Tableland National Park** and spend the day bush walking, swimming in the Gudda Gumoo rock pool and wildlife spotting. Leave early in the morning to allow for travel (150km one way) and a full day exploring.

Water Adventures
Hire a boat or kayak and take to the waters of **Lake Maraboon**. Throw in some Red Claw pots and see if you can catch some tasty, freshwater crayfish for dinner.

Swim, Splash, Repeat
There is no better way to spend a hot summer day than lounging by the pool. **Emerald Aquatic Centre** has you covered with two pools, three waterslides, and a children's splash pad area. Note: the centre is closed from June to August.

Botanical Delight
Spend the morning walking or biking through the **Emerald Botanic Gardens**. Stop for a picnic by the river, before letting the kids explore the adventure playground including a monorail, 25-metre flying fox, and giant mouse wheel.

Tee Up
See which family member can belt a ball the farthest at the **driving range**, or who can get a hole in one at the **Emerald Golf Club**. Golf equipment and electric carts available for hire.

Emerald Aquatic Centre

Blockbuster Bliss
Pick from the latest release movies playing at the local **cinema**, then get the kids to make the hard decision - popcorn or choc top ice cream?

Science Safari
Discover the wonders of science at the **Outback Exploratorium's** STEAM lab, including a discovery space, workshop, and retail outlet.

Pedal to the Metal
Got kids who love to skate, bike or scooter? The **Emerald Skate Park** caters to all skill levels with half and quarter bowls and two large quarter pipes. Alternatively, let the kids enjoy the jumps, bumps, and turns of **Sunrise Rotary BMX Park**.

Playful Palate
Emerald has a host of **family-friendly cafés**. Savour a hot coffee as the kids enjoy a dedicated play space or spend time together painting ceramics while snacking on cannoli.

Eventful Happenings
Oodles of kid-friendly events take place across the region, including weekly library activities, monthly markets, and annual festivals. Find out more at **whatson.centralqueenslandhighlands.com.au**

Playground Adventures
Nothing spells **FREE** family fun like a morning or afternoon spent at a playground. Here are some of our favourites:

- Emerald Botanic Gardens, Cliffe Street
- Emerald Botanic Gardens - Windmill, Rifle Range Road
- Lions Park, Corner Yamala and Ruby Streets
- Vicki Peters Park, Rifle Range Road
- Steve Bell Park, 9 Rogers Street
- Centenary Park, 23 Centenary Drive

ROUTE 66

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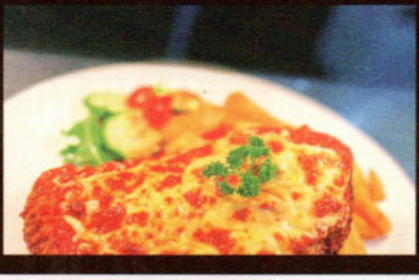

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www.emeraldcabinandcaravanvillage.com.au

LAKE MARABOON

MUST EXPLORE

Fishing

Start your freshwater fishing adventure at Lake Maraboon. It is the only water body in the Central Queensland area that was once actively stocked with Murray Cod. It is currently stocked with Yellowbelly, Silver Perch, and Barramundi, all primed to give unforgettable fishing experiences. A fishing permit (SIPS) is required and can be obtained from the Emerald Post Office or online **fisheries.qld.gov.au.**

Boating

With expansive waterways, inlets, and open bays, boating enthusiasts have plenty of room to spread out and enjoy sports such as water skiing, wake boarding, tubing, and jet skiing. If your boating preferences are a bit more leisurely, the lake is a wonderful place to explore by kayak, canoe, or paddleboard. Boats and kayaks are available for hire.

Recreation

Pick a shady tree and enjoy a picnic with water views. The lake is known for its stunning sunsets, so time your visit to watch the sun go down over the water. Tables and electric barbecues are available.

Follow your picnic with a stroll along the lake's edge, a great way to see the extensive birdlife, sandstone escarpments, and native bushland, or cool off in the designated swimming area.

ESSENTIALS

Accommodation

Camping is not permitted around the lake, however camping and cabin facilities are available at the privately run accommodation provider nearby.

Fairbairn Dam

While the water is called Lake Maraboon, meaning 'where the black duck fly', the wall and spillway are called Fairbairn Dam.

HOW TO CATCH RED CLAW

Lake Maraboon is well known for its abundant Red Claw. Here are our top tips to help you catch the tasty crayfish.

- Red Claw are best caught in opera house traps. A maximum of four pots are permitted per person and must be labelled with your contact details.
- When it comes to bait, every fisher has their own theory, but fruit, partially cooked vegetables, and pet food are most popular.
- Place the pots at various depths (three to six metres), near weed beds, submerged trees, or rocks.
- Leave the pots for a few hours, ideally overnight.

Transport your Red Claw in iced water to slow them down, and once home, let them purge in clean water. The only decision left is how to cook them.

Note: A permit is not required for Red Claw and there are no size or bag limits.

Capella Pioneer Village

CAPELLA AND SURROUNDS

FOUR THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT CAPELLA

1 It has Australia's largest restored drop-plank homestead

The 1869 Peak Downs Homestead is a masterpiece of carpentry, constructed using no nails! See it at the Capella Pioneer Village where more than 5,000 items, spread out over 18 buildings, tell the story of the region's agricultural, pastoral, and mining history. Check opening times from Easter to October.

2 It's where Australian troops first wore emu feathers in their hats

The story is told that during the Great Shearers' Strike of 1891, to break the monotony of the long patrols, Mounted Infantry troopers rode down emus and put the bird's feathers in their slouch hats. Visit the Australian Light Horse Monument in Capella Parklands, a striking dedication to the Australian armed forces and the emu plume origins.

3 It's located in the centre of the Bowen Basin coal reserve

Synonymous with mining is the giant earth moving machinery. Get up close and get a selfie with a 40-tonne dragline bucket, aptly named Earth Eater. The bucket moved more than 83 million tonnes of overburden during its life at BMA Gregory coal mine.

4 It was once bordered by volcanoes

Over 30 million years ago, volcanic eruptions built up the now picturesque chain of mountains forming Peak Range National Park. Sunrise and sunset are the best times to take in the views from Peak Range Lookout, located one kilometre south of Capella.

EXPLORE MORE

Capella Parklands

Follow the path that winds from the Pioneer Village, past picnic locations, interpretive signage, and Queensland bottle trees, to the historic 'tent roofed' railway station.

Historic Bakehouse Oven

Take a peek at the 98-year-old wood fired oven and baking equipment on display. The relics have quite the story to tell.

Pole Murals

Stretch your legs along Peak Downs Street to see 30 murals, depicting the town's history, painted on light poles and walls.

Capella Creek Nature Area

Amble along Capella Creek's fire break track and try to see how many of the 120 woodland bird species you can spot. Examples of the area's rocks and a fossilised tree trunk can be found in the geo-park near the bridge.

NEARBY

Lilyvale

Lilyvale was once a thriving town on the Cobb and Co route until the railway bypassed it. Now only a few remnants of broken ceramics can be seen. A shelter has been built on the original location of the Lilyvale Hotel.

Tieri

Tieri is a vibrant mining community supporting Oaky Creek coal mine. If you've packed your clubs, enjoy a game of golf on the award-winning, nine-hole course.

CAPELLA VAN PARK

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Minerva Hills National Park

SPRINGSURE, MINERVA HILLS, AND SURROUNDS

MUST EXPLORE MINERVA HILLS

Lookouts

Enjoy panoramic views over surrounding farming country, Virgin Rock, and the township of Springsure, from four vantage points.

Walking

Skyline lookout is accessed by a 1.6-kilometre return trail. The fairly level track leads to two viewing platforms offering scenic vistas south over Mount Zamia and north beyond Eclipse Gap.

Picnic

For a picnic with a view, stop at Fred's Gorge. The site offers sheltered picnic tables, toilets and drinking water. Alternatively, make a detour to the more secluded Norwood Creek picnic area and see if you can spot an elusive koala in the treetops.

Mountain Biking

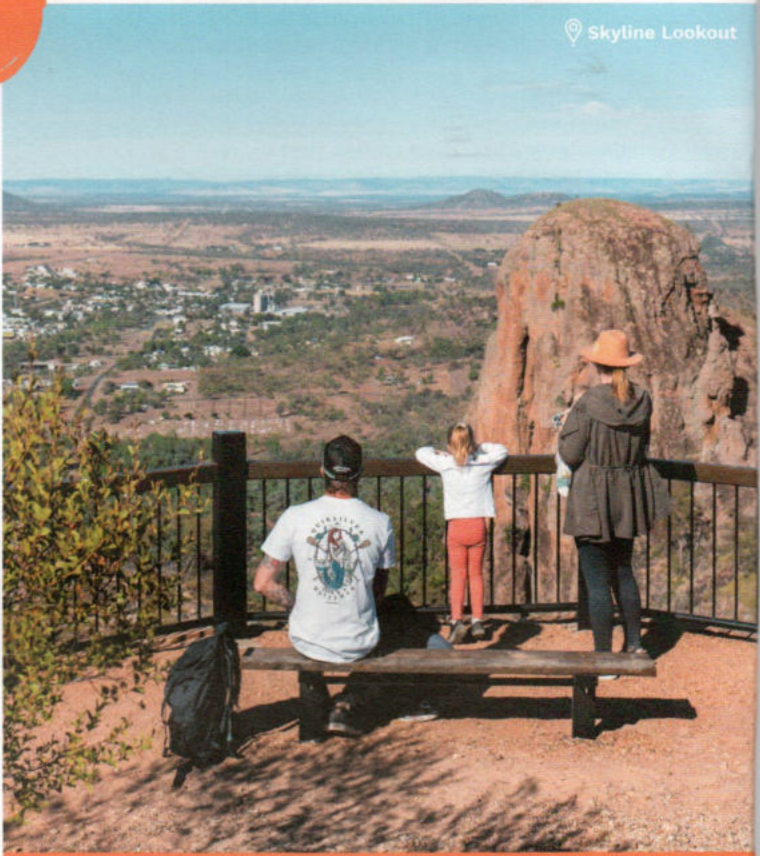
Spend the day exploring the park by bike on the network of shared roads and ancillary tracks.

Wildlife

For the best chance to spot grazing kangaroos or snoozing koalas, visit the park at dawn or dusk. Keep an eye out for the unusual eastern pebble-mound mice which create mounds of small stones around their burrows.

Access

Minerva Hills National Park is located seven kilometres from Springsure. The unsealed road is accessible by high clearance vehicles in dry weather only and is unsuitable for caravans.



Skyline Lookout

EXPLORE MORE

Lions Park

At the base of Minerva Hills, Lions Park is the best vantage point to see Virgin Rock, a niche in the eastern side of Mount Zamia which has a weathered likeness to the Virgin Mary cradling baby Jesus. See if you can spot the figures at night time when Virgin Rock is floodlit for all to see.

ROLLESTON

Beazley Park

Located in the heart of Rolleston, Beazley Park is home to the historic Purbrook Hut and post office buildings, Rolleston Coffee Cart (open April to September), playground, skatepark, and picnic facilities.

Heritage Walk

Discover the stories behind some of Rolleston's buildings on the Heritage Walk. Pick up a brochure from the local library, and while you're there, see the hand-drawn timeline depicting the town's history.

Fishing

Anglers can try their luck at the local fishing hole along the Comet River.

NUGA NUGA NATIONAL PARK

So good they named it twice, Nuga Nuga National Park is somewhat remote, but those who go in search won't be disappointed. Find refuge beside the stunning lake, nestled between the mountains of Arcadia Valley. Note: 4WD recommended, essential following rain.

First Peoples

The Karingbal peoples believe that Lake Nuga Nuga was created by a pair of Mundagurri (Rainbow Serpents) that now reside under the two dominating peaks at the northern shoreline of the lake.

Bush Camping

Camp beneath the stars on the banks of Lake Nuga Nuga. You will need to be self sufficient as no facilities are provided. Camping permit is required.

Bird Watching

Scratch that twitch! The lake provides a valuable habitat for more than 150 different species of birds.

Photography

The lake is a photographer's dream, with dead ghost gums standing proud out of the water, which changes colour as the sun sets.

Water Sports

Explore the serenity of the lake by kayak or canoe, taking in the spectacular display of waterlilies, which flower at times during the year.

ARCADIA VALLEY

Located amidst the Expedition and Carnarvon Ranges, Arcadia Valley lives up to the Greek origins of its name, Ideal Paradise. For a unique experience, stay on a working cattle property in a glamping tent.

EXPEDITION NATIONAL PARK

The Lonesome section of the park can be accessed from Arcadia Valley. Stop at the lookout to take in the sweeping views. Camping is available (permit required).

BAUHINIA

Located on the Dawson Highway, Bauhinia typifies the best in country hospitality. Wet your line in Zamia Creek, 10 kilometres south along the Dawson Highway.

Yumba Burin

5 WAYS TO EXPLORE SPRINGSURE'S HISTORY

You won't need a local library to find the history and heritage of Springsure. In fact, the town very much wears its past on its sleeve.

1. **Federation Woolshed**
   A good starting point is the Federation Woolshed, a replica of the sheds that Britain prefabricated and sent to wool growing colonies at the turn of the 20th century. Photos and antiques line the walls of the historical building, which also acts as the information centre, open daily from Easter to October.

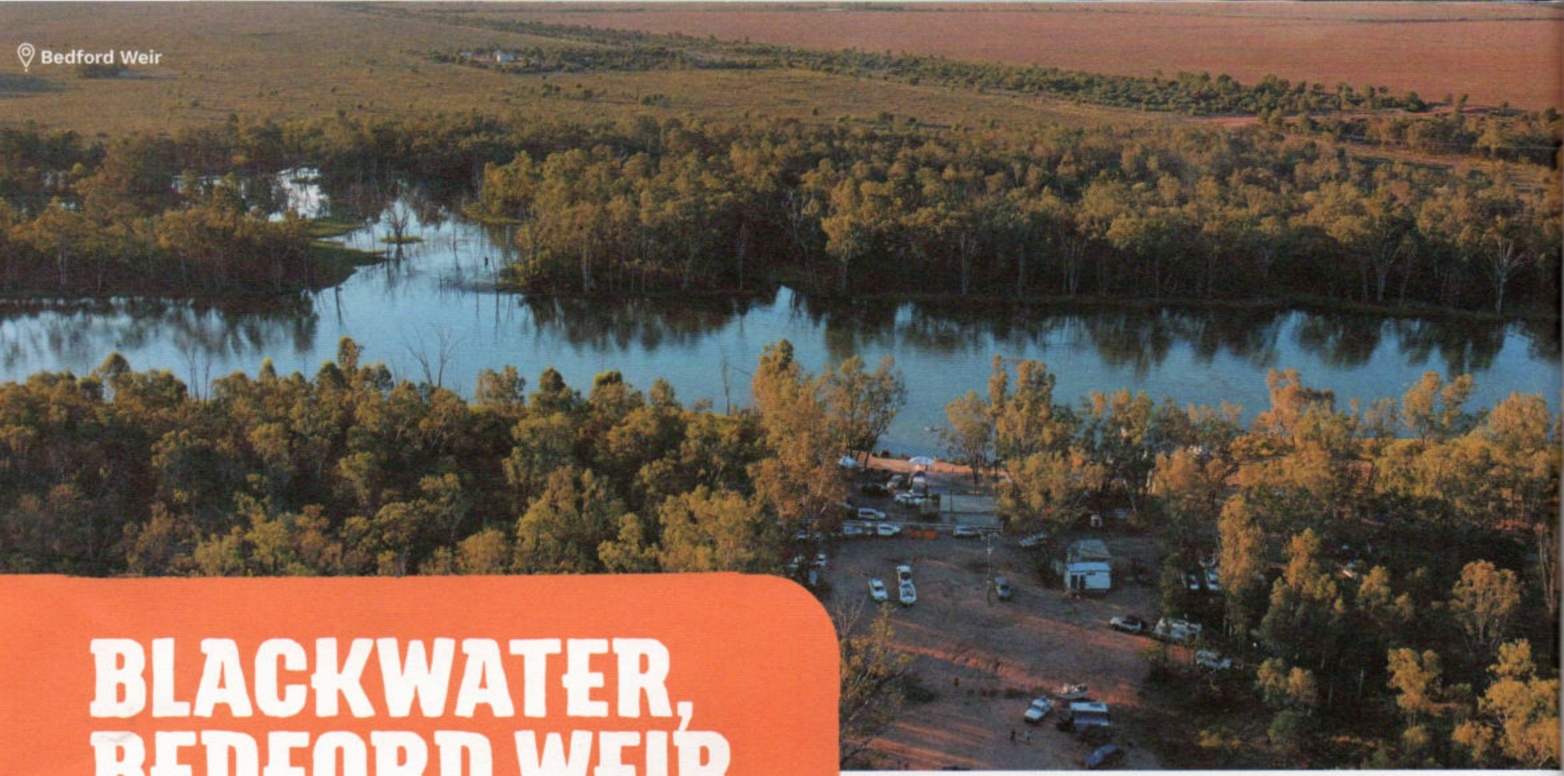
2. **Heritage Walk**
   While you are at the Federation Woolshed, grab a copy of the Heritage Walk guide which details the rich history of the buildings along the main street. Don't miss the original, heritage-listed Springsure Hospital, built in 1868.

3. **Yumba Burin (Keeping Place)**
   Delve deeper into Springsure's history through the eyes of our First Nation peoples. Situated at the cemetery, Yumba Burin aims to build understanding of the Kairi and Bidjara people, their history and culture. The display includes repatriated burial caskets, stone artefacts, scar trees and an art mural. Note: visit is by appointment only - contact the Federation Woolshed.

4. **Wills Massacre Site**
   Secluded headstones, located off Garden Creek Road, mark the site of the 1861 Wills massacre, one of Australia's brutal frontier conflicts. As the memorial is located on the edge of private property, please exercise care when visiting.

5. **Staircase Range**
   Located 17 kilometres south of Springsure is Staircase Range, a sandstone escarpment that has naturally formed, as the name suggests, in the shape of a staircase.

   Marvel at the nearby old wagon road which was carved into the sandstone in the early 1900s by Chinese workers using only picks and crowbars.



Bedford Weir

BLACKWATER, BEDFORD WEIR, AND SURROUNDS

EXPLORE BEDFORD WEIR

Fishing

Bedford Weir is a paradise for anglers. Drop a line and try your luck with Saratoga, Barramundi and Yellowbelly, or throw in a pot to catch some Red Claw crayfish. A fishing permit is not required.

Boating

The calm and flat waters of the Mackenzie River provide ideal conditions for boating, skiing and kayaking.

Picnic Areas

Electric barbecues and a playground are set in shaded areas by the river, making it an ideal picnic spot.

Wildlife

The peace and tranquillity of Bedford Weir encourages a wide range of wildlife. Keep a look out for wallabies, potoroos, echidnas, bandicoots, and the large pride of peacocks that call the area home.

History

Bedford Weir is located near the site of the notorious 1867 gold escort murders. Fuelled by greed and gambling debt, John Thomas Griffin, Rockhampton's then Gold Commissioner, shot Constables Patrick Cahill and John Power in his quest to steal the £4,000 that the group were transporting to Clermont.

ESSENTIALS

Accommodation

If the fish are biting, stay a few days and make use of the camping facilities including hot showers and toilets for a gold coin donation. Maximum stay seven nights.

Bedford Weir

HOW TO HOOK A SARATOGA

For those wanting a truly unique freshwater fishing experience, the Saratoga is a highly intelligent and aggressive sportfish. Here are some tips to help you hook the emperor of fish:

- Look for them just beneath the surface.
- Try using surface lures, poppers, and fizzers.
- Focus around structure, shade, and deep banks.
- If you see one, don't rush as you will only get one or two casts. Stealth is key as they are easily spooked.

It is a heart pounding experience to have a Saratoga smash your lure. It may take patience and persistence, but your first Saratoga strike will be etched into your mind forever.

COMET

Dig Tree

View the Coolibah tree trunk that Ludwig Leichhardt marked during his second exploration of the region in 1847. The engraving of the letters DIG L and a downward pointing arrow indicated to those who followed that Leichhardt had buried a powder canister under the tree containing letters to family and friends.

The tree was felled in the 1950s due to fears it would be lost to fire. After time in Brisbane and the Miles Museum, it was welcomed home to Comet in 1997 and is housed in a purpose-built display.

Comet Railway Station

Located at Whistle Stop Park, the old Comet Railway Station showcases a display of local memorabilia, including old photographs and bridge plans.

Comet Tales and Walking Trails

Take a self-guided walk around the township of Comet, stopping at 16 historical sites. The trail brings to life Comet's varied and colourful history, through story boards, images, and videos. Note: smartphone required.

Book Exchange

Attention book lovers. Comet has a free book-sharing library where anyone may take a book or contribute one to share. Reminiscent of a retro, red telephone box, the library is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Minion Hill

Don't miss the popular roadside stop, dubbed Minion Hill, located on the Capricorn Highway between Blackwater and Comet. A local miner made the family of Minions from recycled items such as gas bottles, fuel tanks, and dog food tins, to encourage drivers to take a break.

Minion Hill

COMET RIVER HOTEL

Well known for its country atmosphere, hearty meals & friendly staff – the perfect meeting spot for travellers and their pets.

Air conditioned, ensuite rooms (king single bed) + powered caravan/camping sites with hot showers.

P 0427 794 943
cometriverhotel@gmail.com
1 Ballard Street Comet Q 4702
facebook.com/CometRiverHotelQLD

Blackwater International Coal Centre

EXPLORE BLACKWATER'S COAL MINING INDUSTRY

Blackwater International Coal Centre

Start your exploration at the Blackwater International Coal Centre (BICC), home to the Australian Coal Mining Museum, which offers a collection of educational exhibits, media displays and simulators. See how coal was formed millions of years ago, wonder at the size and scale of the equipment used today, and learn about how coal is used in everyday items.

Also accessible through the BICC are the Japanese Gardens, built as a symbol of the relationship between Blackwater and sister city Fujisawa, Japan. The zen-like gardens provide the perfect spot to relax and take in the serenity.

Blackwater Lions Park

A short 500 metre stroll from the BICC is the Blackwater Lions Park, which has one of the largest displays of flags in the world. Challenge yourself to see how many flags you can identify.

The 37 flags represent each of the nationalities that worked side-by-side to establish the region's coal mining industry. The park also has a restored steam engine, coal wagon and the 1877 railway station.

With a bakery across the road, the park is an ideal place to stop for a picnic.

At the Coal Face Memorial

Just a few blocks north is a memorial entitled 'At the Coal Face', a tribute to miners killed at Blackwater mines and to the importance of the industry to the region.

Self-Drive Tour

Take a drive along Airport or Ardurad Roads to catch a glimpse of the Blackwater Coal Mine. The mine is one of the largest in the region, employing more than 800 people and producing 14 million tonnes of coal per annum. While the mine is not accessible to the public, large machinery and mine operations are visible from the road.

DUARINGA

Duaringa Historical and Tourism Centre

The Durainga Historical and Tourism Centre is easily spotted from the Capricorn Highway by a huge mural, painted by local artists, depicting the meeting of the Dawson and Mackenzie Rivers to become the Fitzroy River.

Inside you'll find:

- A small museum of historical pieces donated by local residents.
- Locally-made arts and crafts available to purchase.
- Fresh, locally-grown produce.
- Book exchange.
- A range of visitor information and brochures.

The centre is open daily from Easter to October.

Mackenzie Park

Mackenzie Park is home to the unique Budgeroo or Duaringa stringy bark tree, which was used by the Aboriginal community to make rope, baskets and building materials.

The park has a camping area with electric barbecues, playground, charging tree, WiFi, and hot shower for a gold coin donation. Maximum stay 48 hours.

Historical Trail

Go on a walking tour of Duaringa's historical buildings and landmarks. Interpretive signage provides insight on the town's rich history. Pick up a brochure from the tourism centre.

Mackenzie River Crossing

Mackenzie River Crossing is known to the locals as Duaringa Beach due to the large sandy banks on the southern side of the river. Huge paperbark trees overhang the river, creating a shady spot where you can swim, fish, kayak, and watch the birdlife.

DINGO

Dingo Statue

A life-sized bronze statue of a dingo sits in the main street as tribute to the town's name.

Bingegang Weir

Venture off the beaten track to Bingegang Weir, north of Dingo, on the mighty Mackenzie River. The spot is popular for its wild Saratoga and secluded bush surrounds. You can easily spend a day without meeting another person, just you and the fish.

BLUFF

Bluff Railway Station

Make tracks to Bluff, a major railway interchange station for large coal trains. Have a beer at the pub, directly across from the railway station, and watch the trains go past.

Coal Train Facts

An average coal train on the Blackwater Rail Corridor:

- is pulled by either 3 electric or 4 diesel locomotives.
- can be more than 1.7 kilometres long with more than 100 wagons.
- holds 85.5 tonnes of coal per wagon.
- carries $500k to $1.5m worth of saleable coal depending on coal prices.

WHAT CROP IS THAT?

The Central Queensland Highlands is an agricultural powerhouse, with the largest beef cattle herd size in Australia, one of the largest mandarin orchards in the southern hemisphere, and significant exports of cotton, cereal, and pulses.

Here are some commonly grown crops you might spot on your travels.

Sorghum

Mungbeans

Cotton

Chickpeas

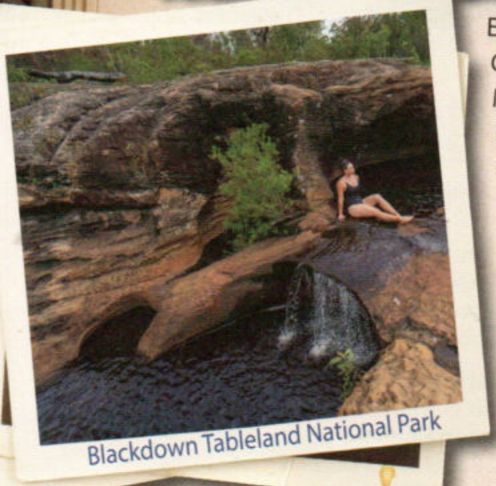
Wheat

Mandarins

'DIG THE TROPIC'

A SELF DRIVE GEO-DISCOVERY TRAIL

You don't need to have a degree in Palaeontology to experience an unforgettable adventure holiday.

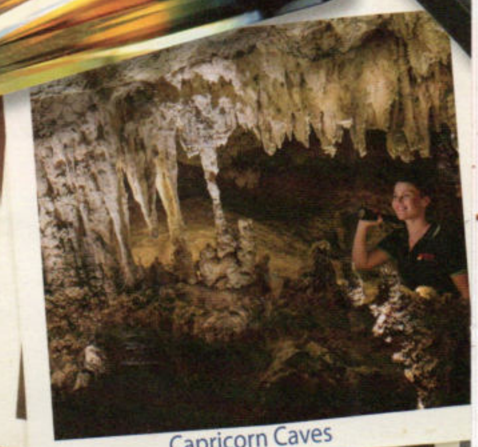


Blackdown Tableland National Park

Explore ancient limestone caverns at Capricorn Caves, dig for volcanic 'Thunder-Eggs' at Mt Hay Gemstone Park, fossick for gems on the Sapphire Gemfields and more... on the Tropic of Capricorn!

If you have a taste for adventure, we have the place for you. **Dig The Tropic** links fifteen geological wonders along Tropic of Capricorn, from Outback to the Reef. Turn your next holiday into an unforgettable adventure, start planning online at www.digthetropic.com.au

Dig the Tropic of Capricorn & discover a whole new meaning to the land downunder!



Capricorn Caves

Theropods were a group of meat-eating dinosaurs, or carnivores.

Monsters of the inland sea

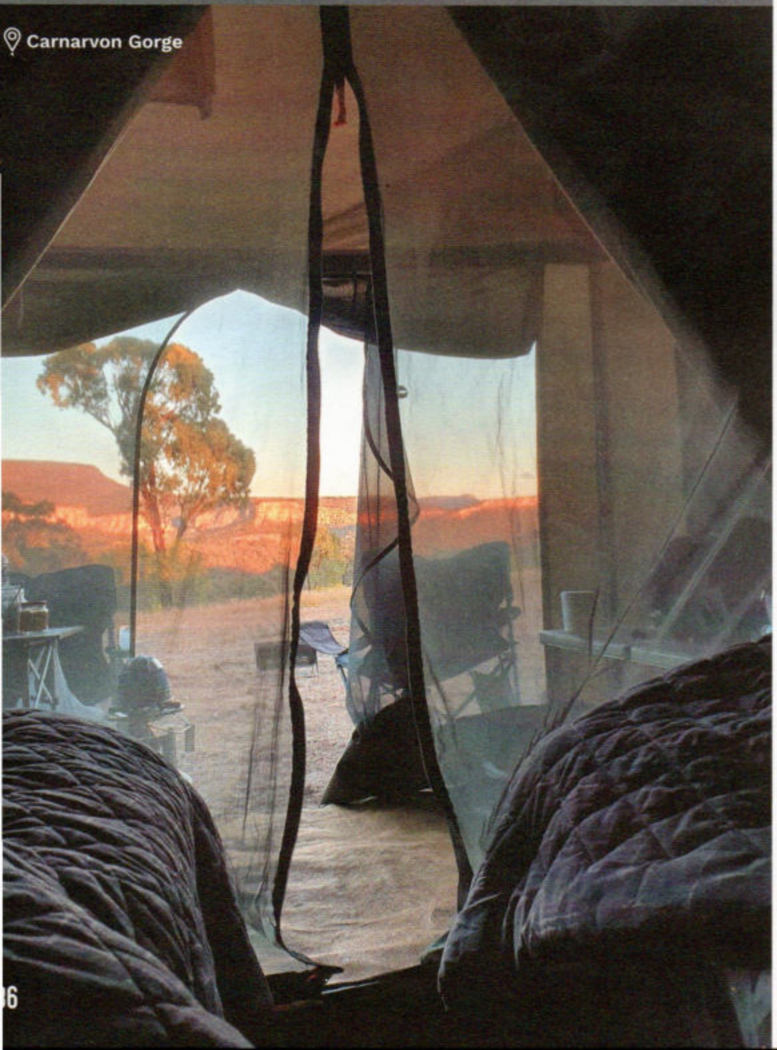
Dig the Tropic
Outback to the Reef

Plan your drive | www.DigTheTropic.com.au   **For more holiday info | www.VisitCapricorn.com.au**

Mackenzie River Crossing

CAMPING AND CARAVANNING

Camping or caravanning in the Central Queensland Highlands is a great way to dig a little deeper and experience a closer connection to the landscape. Wake up with the birds, bush surrounds and a new place to explore.



Carnarvon Gorge

WHERE TO STAY

CARAVAN PARKS

You will be spoilt for choice, with more than 25 budget-friendly caravan parks located throughout the region, offering powered and unpowered sites, and a range of cabin options.

In addition to creature comforts such as hot showers, camp kitchens and laundry facilities, some parks provide on-site entertainment, swimming pools, playgrounds, and fossicking facilities.

SELF-SUFFICIENT CAMPING

For those looking to forego conveniences and get off the grid, the region has several self-sufficient camping options.

Bedford Weir, Blackwater

A popular fishing destination offering tranquil bush camping. 25 kilometres north of Blackwater. Maximum stay seven nights. Gold coin donation.

Mackenzie Park, Duaringa

Spacious, grassed sites, shaded by native Budgeroo trees. Maximum stay 48 hours. Gold coin donation.

Mackenzie River Crossing, Duaringa

Located along the sandy banks of the Mackenzie River. 25 kilometres north of Duaringa.

Lions Park, Springsure

An ideal vantage point to see Virgin Rock illuminated at night. Located three kilometres north of Springsure.

Staircase Range, Springsure

Tucked off the highway near the historic Staircase Range cutting. 17 kilometres south of Springsure. Note: high clearance vehicles in dry weather only.

DESIGNATED FOSSICKING SITES

Create the perfect duo by combining gem hunting and camping at one of the dedicated fossicking areas or lands across the Sapphire Gemfields. Fossicking licences and camping permits are required.

NATIONAL PARKS

Very few of the region's national parks can be truly experienced in one day. Camping gives you the opportunity to explore a little longer. Note: camping permits are required.

Blackdown Tableland National Park, Munall Campground
Quiet and shady bush setting, close to walking tracks. Note: access road is partially unsealed and not suitable for towing heavy trailers or caravans.

Nuga Nuga National Park
Remote bush camping on the banks of Lake Nuga Nuga. Note: access road is unsealed.

Expedition National Park, Lonesome Camping Area
Secluded grassy area with brigalow surrounds.

Carnarvon Gorge, Carnarvon National Park
Privately run cabin and caravan parks are available all year round.

The Carnarvon Gorge camping area is open during the Queensland Easter, June-July, and September-October school holidays.

The Big Bend camping area is accessed by a 19.4-kilometre return walk and is open all year round.

Carnarvon National Park
Bush camping is available in the Salvator Rosa, Ka Ka Mundi and Mount Moffatt sections of Carnarvon National Park.

ESSENTIALS

Dump Points and Potable Water

- Blackwater, Turpentine Road
- Capella, Bridgeman Park
- Duaringa, Mackenzie Park
- Emerald, Showgrounds
- Rolleston, Beazley Park
- Rubyvale, Sapphire Rubyvale Road
- Springsure, Rich Park

FUR BABIES

Bring your fur baby on holiday and stay at one of the many pet-friendly caravan parks and accommodation providers.

With so many outdoor activities and attractions, the Central Queensland Highlands has a host of paw-some holiday options. Here are some to get you inspired:

- Search for gems at one of the Sapphire Gemfields' designated fossicking areas and lands.
- Go for an on-leash stroll through the Sapphire Gemfields Wetland Reserve, Capella Parklands, and Emerald Botanic Gardens.
- Get a photo of your pooch with the Dingo Statue.
- Let them get their paws wet at Lake Maraboon and Bedford Weir.
- Follow the self-guided historical trails in Rolleston, Springsure, Comet, and Duaringa.

Dog Parks
Take the opportunity to let your dog off the leash at these local dog parks:

- Blackwater, Corner of Hunter and Park Streets
- Emerald, Rifle Range Road
- Rolleston, Corner of Meteor and Brown Streets
- Springsure, Dawson Highway, southbound

Boarding Kennels
Unfortunately, dogs are not permitted in Queensland National Parks. Thankfully there are boarding kennels located in Emerald, Blackwater, and Carnarvon Gorge so your dog can have their own holiday while you spend time exploring. Day care and grooming services are also available.

MARABOON PET RESORT

Accommodation specifically designed to ensure all of our furry friends have the safest and most comfortable stay with us while you're away. Doggy Day Care is a new adventure each day with our jam-packed schedule. Exceptional Grooming Salon for all your poochs' needs.

07 4987 7748

admin@maraboonpetresort.com.au
Lot 2 Keeping Street, Emerald

Maraboon Vet Surgery Emerald

Small animal, purpose built practice, specialising in canine and feline Veterinary services. Striving to provide all our clients and patients with the best veterinary care possible. We strongly believe Pets are an important part of any family.

07 4987 6800

admin@maraboonvet.com.au
61 Hospital Road, Emerald

Maraboon Vet Surgery Blackwater

The Maraboon Vet Surgery has expanded with a Surgery in Blackwater! We hope to assist our wonderful Blackwater clients by providing excellent Veterinary care and treatment. Our medicine and treatment options are always modernising to reflect advances in veterinary technology and research.

07 4843 5099

admin@maraboonvetblackwater.com.au
16 Blain Street, Blackwater

Gemfields Festival

EVENTS

TEN MUST SEE EVENTS

1 Taste Central Highlands
March (2024), Emerald
Delight your tastebuds at the biennial field-to-fine-dining event. The four-course, curated menu showcases some of the region's best produce, producers, and artisans.

2 Central Highlands Easter Sunflower Festival
Easter, Emerald
Cars, trucks, bikes and even people are swathed in bright yellow sunflowers during the festival's street parade. Family fun is on the agenda with three days of events including an art exhibition, horse races and rodeo.

3 Capella Country Music Festival
May, Capella
Get your Akubra and check shirt sorted for the Capella Country Music Festival. In addition to a great line up of country music artists, the six days include a talent search, bush poets' breakfast and bush cooking demonstrations.

4 Central Highlands Agricultural Show Circuit
May/ June, Comet, Capella, Springsure, Emerald
Come for the dagwood dogs, stay for the wood chopping and sideshow alley. The much-loved annual events celebrate the talents and spirit of the local communities. Enjoy hours of live entertainment and spectacular fireworks displays.

5 Gemfields Rocks
Last weekend May (2024), Sapphire Gemfields
Calling all rock music and classic car enthusiasts for a weekend of live bands, dancing, and car displays. Revel in the festival atmosphere and indulge in the sapphire and craft market stalls.

6 AG-Grow
June, Emerald
Kick some tyres at Ag-Grow, the region's premiere agricultural field day, featuring over 300 exhibitors, bull and horse sales, and a working cattle dog challenge.

7 BBQ & Beer Fest
August, Emerald
Don't miss the mouth-watering celebration of Australia's two favourite pastimes - barbecuing and beer. Competition is fierce in the low and slow smoker, and camp oven cook-offs.

8 Gemfields Festival
Second week August, Sapphire Gemfields
Come and celebrate everything gems! The week-long extravaganza features almost 20 events, including cutting demonstrations, gemmology workshops, sapphire markets, historical tours, live music, and much more.

9 World Dingo Trap Throwing Competition
August, Dingo
Could you throw a dingo trap 48 metres? Watch punters try at the world championships, held in conjunction with a country race day.

10 Capella Pioneer Village Heritage Day
September, Capella
See the museum come to life with blacksmithing, steam engine, earth moving, and sheep shearing demonstrations, plus an operating country cinema and tractor parade.

There's always something happening in the Central Queensland Highlands. Check out our What's On calendar for a full list of events and details.

EXPLORE MORE

Blackwater May Day Fun Fair
Spend the Labour Day long weekend in Blackwater enjoying the rodeo, car show, rides, market stalls, live entertainment, and fireworks.

Springsure Mountain Challenge, *May*
Challenge yourself and walk, jog, or run through the scenic Minerva Hills National Park, in the name of charity.

Up Down Blackdown, *August*
For an event you'll remember, traverse the fire trails of Blackdown Tableland National Park by foot or mountain bike.

Gemfields Mardi Gras, *September*
The Sapphire Gemfields comes alive with a celebration of diversity and inclusion.

Nogoa November, *Emerald*
Celebrate the local river system with market stalls, kayaking, children's activities, and giveaways.

Country Races
Whether you're a horse racing enthusiast, Fashions of the Fields admirer, or simply looking for live entertainment, our country race days have something for everyone. Don't miss these signature events:

- Springsure St Patrick's Race Day, *March*
- Dingo Race Day, *August*
- Emerald 100, *October*

Arts and Culture
Visit an art exhibition at the Emerald and Springsure galleries or see a live performance by local or touring acts at the Emerald Town Hall, Capella Cultural Centre, and local hotels.

Rodeo and Campdrafts
Get behind the cowboys and cowgirls at a rodeo or campdraft. Save the date for these action-packed events:

- Springsure Campdraft, *April*
- APRA Junior National Finals, *Emerald, June*
- Capella Campdraft, *August*
- Comet River Windmill Campdraft, *September*

MARKETS

The quintessential markets are one of the best ways to spend a lazy Saturday or Sunday in the Central Queensland Highlands. Grab a hot coffee and spend the morning foraging for bargains, fresh produce, or one-of-a-kind handmade wares.

Emerald Lions Markets
First Sunday of each month
Christmas Mega Markets, Second Sunday of December

Twilight on Egerton, Emerald
Second Saturday of June, September, and March
First Saturday of December

Highlands Produce Swap, Emerald
Third Sunday of each month

Capella Community Markets
Fourth Sunday of February, March, April, June, August, and October

Rubyvale Markets
Every Saturday, Easter to October

Sapphire Markets
Every Sunday, Easter to October

Springsure Markets in the Park
Third Sunday of select months

Capella Christmas in July Markets
July

Emerald State School Christmas Craft Fair
November

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS EASTER SUNFLOWER FESTIVAL

Easter in Central Qld Highlands is SUNFLOWER FESTIVAL TIME! A week of events including the traditional Street Parade followed by Family Fun Day, Races, Rodeo and more! Email for more info or to register as a Queen entrant or Sponsor.

P 0427 276 746
cheastersunflowerfestival@hotmail.com
Emerald Q 4720
FB: CentralHighlandsEasterSunflowerFestival

EMERALD JOCKEY CLUB

Upcoming Race Dates:
2nd Sep, 2023 .... Ladies and Tradies
14th Oct, 2023 .... Emerald 100!
25th Nov, 2023 .... Derby Day
3rd Feb, 2024 .... Tropical Race Day
30th Mar, 2024 .... Easter Race Day
18th May, 2024 .... Emerald Cup

P 07 4982 2029
1 Racecourse Road, Emerald Q 4720
FB: EmeraldJockeyClub | emeraldraces.com

EMERALD LIONS CLUB (QLD)

For local produce, treats and treasures, plus a jumping castle for the kids, visit our markets, held on the 1st Sunday of the month. Visiting Lions and CH locals are welcome to our meetings, held on the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month.

P 0427 580 265
admin@gemplumbingqld.com
Markets – Morton Park, Emerald Q 4720
facebook.com/emeraldlions

CARNARVON GORGE

Immerse yourself in wilderness and embrace Mother Nature as you wind through the deep and dramatic gorge system, carved out by wind and rain over millions of years. As you marvel at the geological wonder, you start to wonder – why stay for just one night and tackle just one of the trails, when there's so much more to explore.

Boolimba Bluff

3 WAYS TO EXPLORE CARNARVON GORGE

1 Walking Trails
Put on your hiking boots and explore the natural beauty of Carnarvon's rugged wilderness. A minimum of three days is recommended to walk the tracks and explore the hidden side gorges and Indigenous rock art sites. See page 15 for a complete walking guide.

2 Guided Tours
Enhance your Carnarvon Gorge adventure by going on a guided tour with one of the commercial operators. Full day and night tours are available.

3 Scenic Flights
Treat yourself to a scenic flight and take in the magnificent views of Carnarvon Gorge from the air. Flights leave from Rolleston and Emerald.

EXPLORE MORE

Swimming
Invigorate yourself post exploration with a refreshing dip in the Rock Pool. The natural pool was carved from the bed of Carnarvon Creek by the turbulent waters of past floods and is the only place in Carnarvon Gorge where you can go swimming.

Rock Art
Rock art on sandstone overhangs are a fragile reminder of Aboriginal people's long and continuing connection with the gorge. These ochre stencils, rock engravings and freehand paintings are some of the finest Indigenous rock imagery in Australia.

Wildlife
Opportunities for bird watching are plentiful, with more than 170 bird species. Catch a glimpse of platypus, possums and other creek life on an early morning stroll along the Nature Trail. A night walk with a torch can reveal gliders, possums and bush stonecurlews.

Make it a Breeze

breezeholidayparks.com.au | (07) 4984 4535

Breeze
HOLIDAY PARKS

MAIN WALKING TRACK AND SIDE TRACKS

Distances are measured from the visitor centre

The main gorge walking track criss-crosses Carnarvon Creek, winding 9.7 kilometres from the visitor centre to Big Bend. Coming off the main trail are seven side tracks leading to an array of sites. These side tracks can be combined to create one-day walks.

Boolimba Bluff

6.4km return, 2-3hr (2.2km return from main track)

Scale the steep slopes and be rewarded with views out towards distant ranges from Boolimba Bluff, towering 200 metres above Carnarvon Creek.

Moss Garden

7km return, 2-3hr (1.3km return from main track)

Water drips constantly from the sandstone walls of the Moss Garden, supporting a lush carpet of mosses, ferns, and liverworts.

Amphitheatre

8.6km return, 3-4hr (1.2km return from main track)

Hidden inside the walls of the gorge is a 60-metre-deep chamber, gouged from the rock by running water.

Ward's Canyon

9.2km return, 3-4hr (540m return from main track)

Be enticed into the cool and inviting Ward's Canyon, where a small pocket of the world's largest fern flourishes.

Art Gallery

10.8km return, 3-4hr (600m return from main track)

More than two thousand engravings, ochre stencils and freehand paintings adorn the 62-metre-long sandstone walls of this significant Indigenous site.

Cathedral Cave

18.2km return, 5-6hr

This massive, wind-eroded overhang sheltered Aboriginal people for thousands of years.

Boowinda Gorge

18.4km return, 5-6hr

Rock-hop through the boulder strewn side-gorge. The first kilometre is the most spectacular with its sculpted walls of moss-covered sandstone.

Big Bend

19.4km return, 7-8hr

Visit a spectacular section of Carnarvon Creek, with a natural pool nestled beneath looming sandstone walls.

SUGGESTED JOURNEYS

- If you only have one full day, you can't miss the gorge's 'Big Four': Art Gallery, Ward's Canyon, Amphitheatre, and Moss Garden. 14km return, 5hr
- Boolimba Bluff is often tackled separately as it is a Class 4 uphill track with stairs and ladders. The lookout is at its best during sunrise, so plan to walk at dawn. 6.4km return, 2-3hr
- Get an early start and hike directly to the upper gorge to see Cathedral Cave, Boowinda Gorge and Big Bend. 20km return, 8hr

SHORT WALKS

There are three short walks located at the mouth of the gorge, perfect for those pressed for time or looking for something less strenuous.

Nature Trail

1.5km return, 1hr

Grab your camera and get up close to the local wildlife along the shady banks of Carnarvon Creek. Head out at dawn or dusk for your best chance to spy an elusive platypus.

Mickey Creek Gorge

3km return from Mickey Creek car park, 1.5hr

Wander along Mickey Creek and into narrow side gorges where the walking track becomes a rock-hopping adventure.

Rock Pool

400m return from Rock Pool car park, 20min

3.6km return from Carnarvon Gorge Visitor Area, 2hr

Linger in the shade of fig and casuarina trees, watching for fish and turtles or take a refreshing dip on a hot day.

CARNARVON GREAT WALK

Pack your hiking gear and take on the Carnarvon Great Walk, which links the Carnarvon Gorge and Mount Moffatt sections of the national park.

The full circuit is 87 kilometres, so you'll need six to seven days, good preparation, and high-level bush walking experience to complete this amazing journey.

JOURNEY PLANNER

Boolimba Bluff *6.4km return, 3hr*

Moss Garden *7km return, 2.5hr*

Moss Garden and Amphitheatre *10km return, 3hr*

Moss Garden, Amphitheatre, and Ward's Canyon *11.7km return, 4hr*

Moss Garden, Amphitheatre, Ward's Canyon, and Art Gallery *14km return, 5hr*

Moss Garden, Boowinda Gorge and Big Bend *21km return, 7hr*

Moss Garden, Amphitheatre, Ward's Canyon, Art Gallery, and Cathedral Cave *22km return, 8hr*

5km | 10km | 15km | 20km

Class 3: *Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Tracks may have short steep hill sections, a rough surface, and many steps.*

Class 4: *Walking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough, and very steep.*

Class 5: *Very experienced walkers. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked.*

ESSENTIALS

Visitor Centre

Learn more about Carnarvon Gorge from displays at the visitor centre. The unstaffed centre is open from 8am to 4pm, seven days a week.

Picnic Areas

At the entrance to Carnarvon Gorge, a large, grassy picnic area is set amongst towering eucalypts and cabbage palms. Wheelchair accessible toilets, tables and gas barbecues are available.

Access

Carnarvon Gorge is located between Injune and Rolleston. The 45-kilometre access road is fully sealed and classed an all-vehicle road.

Fuel

There are no fuel stations at Carnarvon Gorge. Remember to fuel up on your way at Injune or Rolleston.

Accommodation

Camping in the Carnarvon Gorge visitor area is available during the Easter, June-July, and September-October Queensland school holidays. The Big Bend camping area, reached by a 19.4-kilometre return walk, is open all year. Camping permits are essential, and bookings should be made online with Queensland National Parks or in person at the CQH Visitor Information Centre.

Privately run accommodation at the entrance of the park is available all year round.

It is recommended to book your accommodation in advance as it can book out quickly during peak times.

Alternative accommodation is available at Rolleston (100km), and Springsure (170km). For self-sufficient campers, there is also nearby Nuga Nuga National Park (125km, unsealed).

Supplies

You will need to bring your own water, food, and supplies. There is a small shop at Breeze Holiday Park, open to all travellers.

Mobile Reception

Take the opportunity to disconnect from your phone and reconnected with nature. Mobile reception is limited in Carnarvon Gorge. The visitor centre offers free WiFi and a public pay phone is available.

Guided Tours

Rewan Memorial

REWAN MEMORIAL

On your way into Carnarvon Gorge, visit the Rewan Memorial, erected to honour the lives of the 14 Australian and five United States military personnel who were killed in an air crash during World War II.

CARNARVON NATIONAL PARK

If you enjoy Carnarvon Gorge, why not visit some other wonders in Carnarvon National Park.

Salvator Rosa *via Springsure*

Dip your toes into the spring-fed waters of Nogoa River, winding its way through a broad, picturesque valley beneath craggy sandstone outcrops. Note: 4WD is required.

Ka Ka Mundi *via Springsure*

Drive through the undulating sandstone country and discover stately bottle trees emerging from silver brigalow forest. Camp by the springs and watch the abundant birdlife. Note: 4WD is recommended.

Mount Moffatt *via Injune*

This is a remote park of wild and diverse landscapes. Enjoy spectacular views from the Consuelo Tableland, the highest plateau in Queensland.

Scan for national park maps, camping permits, park alerts, and further information. Alternatively, call Queensland National Parks 13 74 86.

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRES

Emerald
CQH Visitor Information Centre
3 Clermont Street
07 4982 4142
Open daily

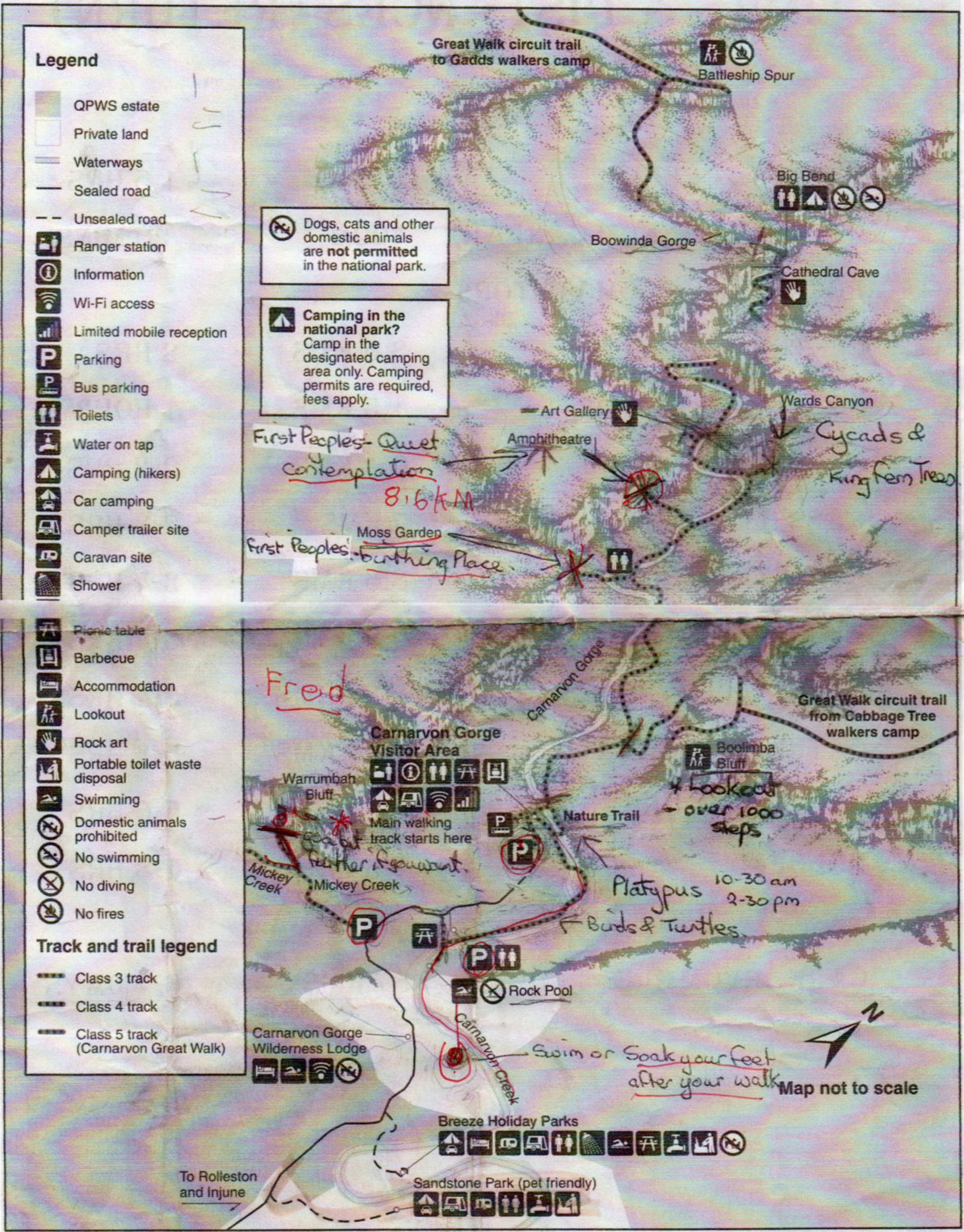
Blackwater
Blackwater International Coal Centre
Capricorn Highway
07 4982 7755
Open Monday to Friday and alternate
Saturdays, Easter – October

Duaringa
Duaringa Historical and Tourism Centre
Mackenzie Park
07 4935 7077
Open daily, Easter – October

Springsure
Federation Woolshed
Gregory Highway
07 4984 1961
Open daily, Easter - October

centralqueenslandhighlands.com.au
@centralqueenslandhighlands #explorecqh

CARNARVON GORGE MAP



TIMES & DISTANCES (RETURN)

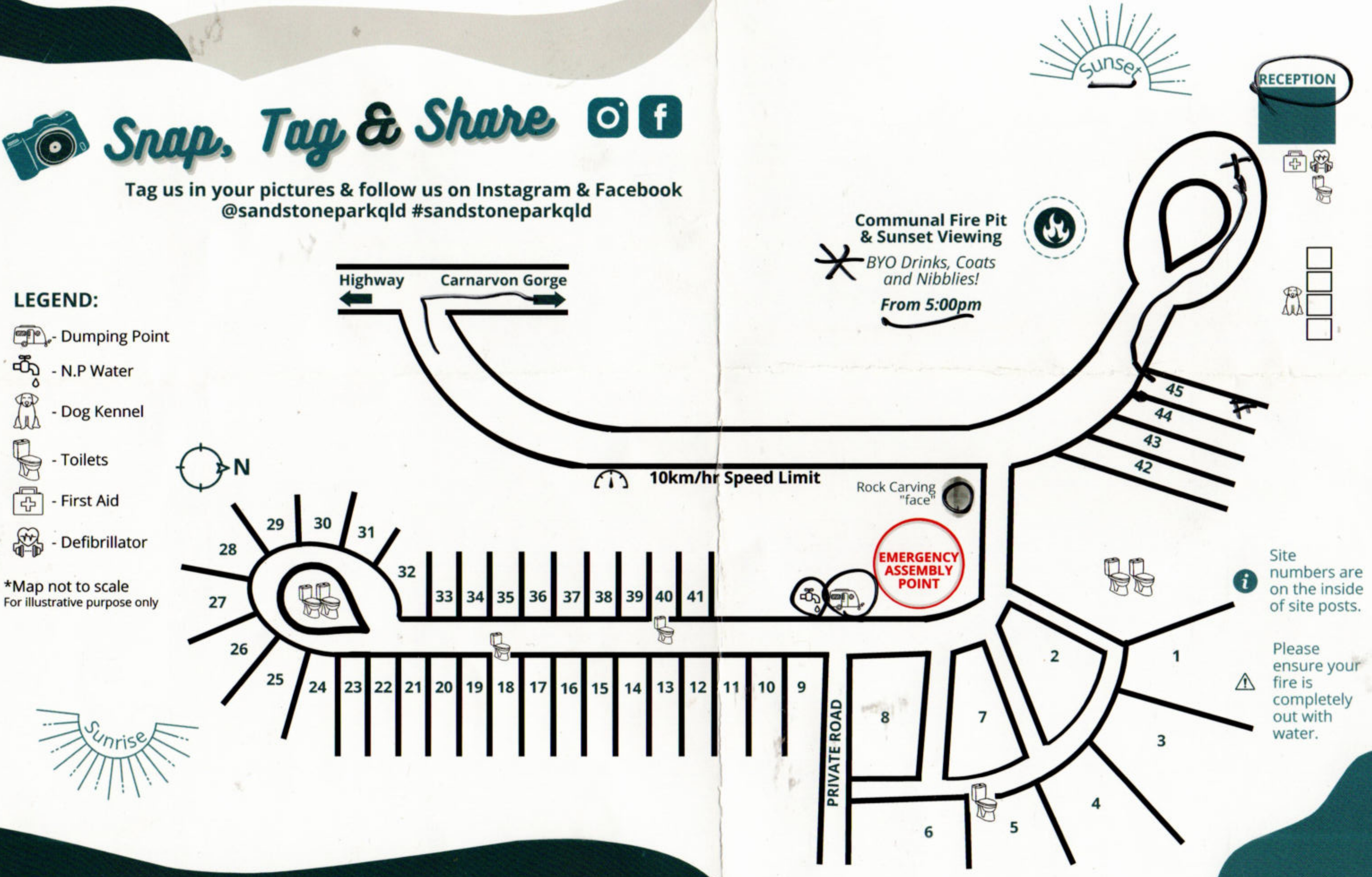
MICKEY'S CREEK	3 KMS	1.5 HRS
ROCK POOLS FROM CARPARK	400M	20 MINS
ROCK POOLS FROM VISITORS CENTRE	3.6 KMS	2 HRS
NATURE TRAIL	1.5 KMS	1 HOUR
BOOLIMBA BLUFF	6.4 KMS	2-3 HRS
MOSS GARDEN	7 KMS	2-3 HRS
AMPHITHEATRE	8.6 KMS	3-4 HRS
WARDS CANYON	9.2 KMS	3-4 HRS
ART GALLERY	10.8 KMS	3-4 HRS
CATHEDRAL CAVE	18.2 KMS	5-6 HRS
BOOWINDA GORGE	18.4 KMS	5-6 HRS
BIG BEND	19.4 KMS	7-8 HRS
CARNARVON GREAT WALK	87 KMS	6-7 DAYS

SANDSTONE PARK
CARNARVON GORGE

phone: 1800 87 4444
email: info@sandstonepark.com.au

Snap, Tag & Share

Tag us in your pictures & follow us on Instagram & Facebook
@sandstoneparkqld #sandstoneparkqld



Site numbers are on the inside of site posts.

Please ensure your fire is completely out with water.

Coleman